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IMAGINE™

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Editorial

1985... and George Orwell is all but forgotten as we turn to more contemporary visionaries of the Science Fiction/Fantasy genre such as Michael Moorcock, the subject of our Special Feature.

In this issue IMAGINE magazine brings you an Earl Aubec mini-module and an exclusive interview revealing details of Moorcock's craft. This will be but the first of many such ventures; in future issues there will be scenarios based on the fantasy worlds of Bob Shaw, Brian Lumley, Stephen Gallagher and countless others. We hope these will be opportunities to enrich your roleplaying and broaden your imaginative experience.

Literature holds much for the adventure gamer: a glimpse of worlds to which we are denied access by the complexity of modern life, ideas for character and adventure to supplement our own. Fantasy fiction is never far removed from the 'real world', and yet more than any other genre it refuses to be bogged down in 'life as it is' with all the defeat and compromise that that entails. As a way of exploring alternative modes of existence and remedies to the world's ills, it is unsurpassed. Enjoy...

Happy New Year!

Kim Daniel

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The Vampire Revamped

Derrick Norton takes a (not-too-close) look at a savoury monster

Vampire: *(n) reanimated corpse that leaves its grave to suck the blood of sleepers.*

Given the above dictionary definition it is surprising to recall that for the **AD&D** vampire no mention is made of any blood-sucking trait. This is a sorry state of affairs; the bite of the vampire is as much an integral part of the monster as is the breath-weapon of dragons. In this article I will offer one interpretation of the vampire's bite, plus information concerning another previously unrepresented characteristic: that of having a loyal henchman. These additions to the AD&D vampire are then complemented by a new (unofficial) range of 'greater vampires' that takes account of other undocumented aspects of the creature, both mythological and cinematic.

The Vampire's Bite

'A creature so afflicted to rise as a vampyr is cursed to a terrible existence. When newly risen, each day is filled with torment: during rest it is taunted with dreams of its former life, and when active it is driven to take blood, since it is only during the act of drinking fresh blood that the creature's misery is mitigated. Yet in time an individual can come to master its blood-lust and from then on it is doubly-dangerous, for it possesses, in general, both a desire and cunning unequalled amongst rational beings.'

Vecna's Book of the UnDead

As correctly noted by Vecna, a vampire is first forced, and later tempted, to drink blood if it is briefly to escape from pain. While a vampire has a matchless capacity for blood it prefers to imbibe it slowly in order to prolong the pleasure. Obviously any victim of this activity must either be charmed, asleep or bound before the vampire strikes. Since the bite of a vampire is highly narcotic, sleeping victims only rarely wake up: 1% chance per level. If the victim is under the vampire's **charm** it cannot resist the command to expose its neck...

Having bitten its prey the vampire then proceeds to suck blood at the rate of 1 pint per turn. Although the creature will die before all the blood has been removed the vampire is able to suck the corpse dry. Unlike a vampire's hand attack the bite does not drain life-levels, only blood.

Contrary to popular belief the body of a creature killed in this way does not automatically rise as a vampire. It takes time for the contagious agent to infect the body completely, and dark damp conditions are also needed. Consequently a vampire can only form if the body is buried within 3 days, and even then the chance is just 1%. It is a common tactic among old vampires to hide the bodies of their prey. Not only does this reduce the chance of discovery, it also helps to prevent any rise in the undead population. When found, bodies are often seen to be somewhat eaten; this was once thought to be the work of vampires — but it is now known that ghouls actively follow a vampire so as to gain a free meal!

On rare occasions a victim of a vampire's bite may live to tell the tale. However, this is a mixed blessing since the probability that the creature has contracted vampirism is much greater. Depending on the amount of blood lost the victim suffers as follows.

TABLE 1: EFFECTS OF BLOOD-LOSS ON A SURVIVING VICTIM

PERCENTAGE OF[1] BLOOD LOST	HUMAN EQUIVALENT (in pints)	EFFECT[2]	DURATION (days)
1 - 15	1	tiredness	1-3
16 - 30	2	slightly weak	2-6
31 - 45	3	fairly weak	3-9
46 - 60	4	'mild disease'	see DMG
61 - 75	5	'severe disease'	see DMG
76+	5+	death	---

Notes

[1] To calculate the approximate volume of blood in an individual, use the ratio of 1 pint for every 18 lbs weight

[2] The DM should adjudicate the results of 'weakness' as appropriate; reducing damage done, increasing the chance of spell failure and so on.

Blood-loss also dictates the likelihood that the victim will become a vampire, with a check to be made each time the individual is drained partially of blood and survives. To calculate the chance, divide the amount of blood lost by 2: thus a human/oid losing 40% of its blood has a 20% chance of turning into a vampire. This value is halved again if a LG holy symbol and/or LG holy water is applied to the wound within 1 round of the attack. Such treatment will inflict 2-7 points of damage, and unless a successful 'system shock' roll is made the victim will also be unconscious for 2-5 rounds. In any event a sleeping creature partially drained of blood (at least 1 pint per night) on 3 successive nights will automatically die by the end of the 3rd night, only to rise as a vampire at the next sundown. In other cases the victim will take some 3-12 days to transform. As the time draws near he or she will become progressively more vampiric in behaviour, although the victim will find its actions clouded with amnesia. Just before the change the creature will seek out a dark place in which to hide from sunlight, since it is here that it will die at dawn in 'readiness' to rise as a vampire at dusk. Note that it is quite possible for a creature to be bitten while asleep, and not know about its predicament apart from a general tiredness similar to a heavy cold. Even use of a mirror will fail to reflect the puncture marks; they can only be seen by others!

Strange as it may seem a vampire does not drain blood from all-and-sundry. Irrespective of its previous race a vampire will, if given a choice, take human blood above other types. The full order of preference is as follows: human, half-orc, 'giant-class creatures', halfling, gnome, mammal, half-elf, avian, dwarf, 'warm-blooded monsters', elf. A vampire will never willingly drink blood from cold- or non-red-blooded creatures. It is interesting to note that those races least favoured by vampires (dwarf and elf) are also those with few (if any) legends concerning the monster's activities.

DM's note: it is suggested that a normal vampire be awarded a further 400 points onto its experience value to take account of the blood-draining ability, which greatly enhances the danger characters face.

The Vampire's Henchman

'Forget not the vampire's minions. Many charmed servants will it have, and one will be especially favoured. In loyalty this servant is without equal, and to ignore him is to court disaster. Unnaturally strong in both mind and body this 'henchman' may go where his master cannot, and by dark and secret deeds achieves much to protect his lord and harm his enemies.'

Van Helsing Guide to Vampire Hunting

The standard cinematic and literary henchman is at odds with the monster's mythological description. Apart from other undead, only rats, bats and wolves habitually associate with the vampire. However, so ingrained is the fantasy expectation of a loyal minion that it takes little imagination to accept the notion.

To obtain this exceptional servant a vampire must first find a willing human or demi-human of CE alignment that actually likes the idea: a vampire may not **charm** or otherwise command a creature into service. The vampire may threaten the individual with death (or worse) should the offer be refused, and the individual will then have to decide whether death is preferable to service! Apart from alignment considerations the selected person can follow any class, and since the vampire can only have one such servant it is normal for only powerful and intelligent individuals to be chosen. Once both have agreed, the pact is sealed with blood; the servant drinking a small amount of the vampire's unholy fluid. As might be expected, the rewards for such an evil alliance are high indeed...

1 The henchman immediately becomes immune to normal and silver weapons. Immunity is also gained with respect to disease and the servant regenerates at the rate of 2 hit points per round, though severed limbs cannot be regrown.

2 Although in appearance the henchman is (slowly) affected by age, he does not suffer the detrimental effects of growing old. Thus, unless slain, the individual is virtually immortal. However, this 'stasis' extends to preventing any further rise in level from experience. The henchman does not require sleep and needs only small amounts of food and water. His stamina is many times greater than normal: any task made difficult by its repetition can be performed for days on end.

3 On drinking the vampire's blood, the henchman is imbued with an unbreakable sense of loyalty, and is incapable of acting in conflict with his master. Indeed over the years a sincere bond of friendship may develop. In practice it is simply not possible to control the henchman's mind either directly (eg **psionic domination**), or indirectly (eg **charm**).

4 As the years of service lengthen the henchman gradually increases in power. Every 10 years* the henchman gradually gains a cumulative 1% absolute resistance to **hold**, **sleep** and **paralysis** magic, plus a similar resistance to poison. For every 50 years* of service the henchman's strength increases to the next category: 18/91 to 18/00 to 19 and so on. Race and sex do not limit this progression but the maximum value is 24.

* These values are based on the human life span. For other races consider 1 year to be 1% of the average life-span.

If and when the vampire is slain, the henchman (if alive) has a period of grace before these powers are lost and age catches up. This period is one day for each year of service. During that time the henchman will do everything possible to bring the master back, or failing that, to punish those responsible.

Greater Vampires

It is a fair comment to make that above medium levels of play, a vampire, though dangerous, is no longer deadly. Bearing in mind its unique weaknesses (eg its attitude to the presentation of a mirror) the vampire as a race is in danger of being overshadowed by other powerful monsters. Yet like dragons the vampire is one of the classic creatures to face, and it seems a shame that the monster is not represented at high levels of play. Good DMing can mitigate this, but even so, in a straight fight a vampire is more frustrating than fatal. Rather than substantially alter the AD&D vampire, a new hierarchy of 'greater vampires' is given. It is suggested that a normal vampire ascends to 'greater' status after 999 years of unlife, with promotion to the next level after a similar period and so on. Except where noted otherwise a greater vampire should be treated as per MM1.

TABLE 2: THE FIVE GREATER VAMPIRES

TITLE	LORD	ARCH-LORD	PRINCELING	PRINCE	ARCH-PRINCE
AC	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
MOVE	18"/24"	24"/30"	30"/36"	36"/42"	42"/48"
HIT DICE	10+5	12+7	14+9	16+11	18+13
% IN LAIR	20%	15%	10%	5%	1%
TREASURE	W	W,Y	Z	Y,Z	U
DAMAGE	1-8+6	1-10+7	1-12+9	2-16+11	3-18+14
SPECIAL ATTACKS					
[1]BLOOD-DRAIN	1 pint	2 pints	3 pints	4 pints	5 pints
[2]CHARM	mammal	nil	monster	nil	mass
[3]HOLD	person	nil	animal	nil	monster
[4]SUMMON	III	IV	V	VI	VII
SPECIAL DEFENSES					
[5]WEAPON PLUS	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3
[6]REGENERATE	4	5	6	7	8
[7]IMMUNITY (magic)	cold	nil	petrification	nil	polymorph
[8]IMMUNITY (turning)	nil	garlic	mirrors	see below	see below
SIZE	7'	7'6"	8'	8'6"	9'
STRENGTH	18/00	19	21	23	25
EXPERIENCE VALUE	7000+14	10850+16	13950+18	16850+20	24500+25

Notes on Table 2

In frequency all greater vampires are 'very rare'. Unless commanded by some evil entity they are only ever encountered singly. All have 1 attack per round for the damage shown; as normal this attack will drain 2 levels. Irrespective of title a greater vampire can only produce, by draining, half-strength vampires as per MM1. All are CE in alignment and possess 19 intelligence. They have neither magic resistance nor psionic ability. They are turned as a 'special' on the cleric undead matrix.

[1] **Blood Drain** Any greater vampire can drink blood as described in this article. In addition, a greater vampire has the ability to suck blood rapidly during combat, making this an effective attack form. This bite attack can be used at the vampire's option in place of the hand attack during 'surprise' situations; that is, when a creature is surprised by the vampire. At other times the bite can only occur if the vampire has rolled a hand 'to hit' value 5 places better than required. The monster then gains an immediate 'to hit' roll for the bite (with no DEX or shield considerations on AC). If this bite succeeds the vampire proceeds quickly to drain the opponent of blood. For any one bite the actual amount taken (in pints) depends on the vampire's title and is the value shown. Obviously in combat a vampire ignores any thoughts of blood-type preference. The effects of this very sudden loss in blood are different from those produced by the previously described gradual decrease (see Table 3).

For example: a human suffering 50% blood loss would lose 9 points each in STR, DEX and CON, would not be able to attack by weapon or by spell, and could only move at a stagger. Of course all these penalties would be extra to the damage and drain effects caused by the initial hand attack that gripped the human so as to facilitate the bite!

It is important to note that the decrease in ability points arises indirectly from the blood loss; they are not drained as such. Thus it is possible for negative values to result and the victim to remain alive. However, if and when CON falls below 3, the individual must make a 'system-shock' roll (based on original constitution) or else die. If CON falls to zero or below another check is required; the chance this time being 20%. In any event an individual with a negative CON value immediately becomes unconscious. Lost ability points are regained with rest at the rate of 2 points per day for each affected characteristic. Alternatively, a **heal** spell will restore values to their original number.

Any human/oid creature bitten by this 'combat-drain' has a chance of becoming a vampire as described previously under 'partial blood-drain'.

[2] **Charm** The powers seen in Table 2 are gained cumulatively; a Princeling of Vampires being able to **charm mammal** and **monster**. They are in addition to the standard **charm person** attack. Each is usable once per night and any effect is broken at dawn. To employ, the vampire must make a 1 second somatic gesture; for other details see spells of same name. As per DMG, a greater vampire can mentally communicate with, and control, its charmee(s).

[3] **Hold** These powers are gained cumulatively and each type can be used once per night, any effect being broken at dawn. To employ, the vampire must speak the command to 'stop'; it is not necessary that the target(s) hear or understand the vampire in order to be affected. For other details see spells of same name.

[4] **Summon** In addition to the summoning powers described in the MM1 a greater vampire can, once per night, **summon monsters** of level according to title. Such creatures will never be of good alignment and can be commanded mentally by the vampire. See spell for other details.

[5] **Weapon Plus** The magical weapon bonus needed to affect the vampire.

[6] **Regenerate** The value given is the number of hit points per round.

[7] **Magical Immunities** These are gained cumulatively and are in addition to those described in MM1.

[8] **Turning Immunities** As a greater vampire gets older it becomes progressively more resistant to the standard methods of defence. These immunities are gained cumulatively; a Princeling being immune to either garlic or mirrors. If presented, such items would wither or crack. In addition, a Prince of Vampires has a certain resistance to clerical 'turning', being unaffected by the actions of any evil cleric. Likewise an Arch-Prince is additionally resistant to the turning power of any neutral cleric. These very powerful undead are simply too evil to be swayed by other evil (or, for an Arch Prince, neutral) force. This immunity also extends to certain uses of a LG holy symbol: if a greater vampire is immune to turning by a cleric of a particular alignment then it will also be immune to other characters of that alignment that try to keep it at bay by presenting a LG holy symbol! Thus only good-aligned clerics have a chance of turning the most powerful greater vampires, and only good-aligned characters can keep one at bay by use of a LG symbol.

TABLE 3: EFFECTS OF RAPID BLOOD LOSS

PERCENTAGE OF BLOOD LOST	EFFECTS ON STR, DEX & CON	EFFECTS ON MOVEMENT
1-15	nil	no charge possible
16 - 30	-1	fast trot max
31 - 45	-3	walk max
46 - 60	-9	can only stagger*
61 - 75	-15	can only crawl**
76+	death	death

Notes

* Victim cannot attack or cast spells; may only defend

** Victim cannot attack, cast spells or defend

Greater Vampire Powers

A greater vampire may, in one segment, change form to a wolf or bat. In the new form the vampire loses all special attacks but retains all defensive powers, as well as keeping AC and Movement Rate. In wolf-form the vampire also retains its strength and may employ a bite attack for the damage appropriate to title. Of course this bite can neither suck blood, drain levels nor inflict vampirism.

These shape-changed forms are much used by greater vampires in order to roam about the countryside without discovery. Very often the monster deliberately kills creatures while in wolf-form so that other unexplained disappearances will be attributed to the 'rogue wolf' and not the actions of a more deadly enemy!

A greater vampire is also capable, in one round, of changing form to that of any human or demi-human norm of desired age, sex and appearance. Unlike the previous power the vampire's clothing and belongings remain as normal. Although the vampire's voice is also altered, the new facial appearance will always, in some subtle respect, resemble the vampire's own; the type of similarity one can recognise after the fact has been pointed out... In the new state the vampire again loses all special attacks, but apart from AC and Movement, retains its defensive powers. The vampire still has its own strength and can attack once per round for a base damage according to size plus the damage bonus due to strength.

In any altered form a greater vampire does not leave a reflection and moves with the silence associated with the undead. The monster can only ingest fresh blood or small amounts of raw meat. Normal and giant-sized animals will sense something amiss in the vampire's presence, but will not attack nor otherwise indicate that it is the vampire that is making them nervous. Only if physical contact occurs will the animal realise the source of its unease.

A greater vampire can change between forms as desired, eg from vampire to bat to gaseous. In any form it has the ability to 'see' the life-form of creatures up to a distance of 12". Even 'elemental' life-forces can be detected, as can the absence of life generated by other undead. Only animated (eg golems) and magically protected creatures cannot be so 'seen'; thus the various forms of invisibility are useless unless combined with such powers as an **amulet of proof vs detection and location**.

In addition, greater vampires also possess supernatural sense of smell as well as an excellent sense of hearing (treat as equivalent to an owl). From scent alone the vampire can recognise race, sex, etc, plus the presence of armour and other such factors. Even the presence of magic and its type can be picked up, and if provided with a fairly recent scent of a creature the vampire may even **know alignment**.

In true-form only, a greater vampire also has the following powers:

When desired, and in any event when overtly stressed, the monster can exude a foul stench that will affect all creatures within a 3" radius as the stench of a ghast. Apart from holy water the stench will also spoil food and drink.

A greater vampire continually radiates **fear** that affects creatures as below (no saving throw).

12" radius: all normal and giant-sized animals become agitated
6" radius: as above, plus untrained animals will attempt to flee
3" radius: as above, plus trained animals also attempt to flee.

Obviously, rats, bats and wolves are immune to these effects as are non-intelligent animals, and those animals under the vampire's control.

In human-kind the vampire is especially feared: any zero-level human that gazes upon the vampire's true face will be turned permanently insane (no save): 75% catatonia, 25% suicidal mania.

Once per turn a greater vampire can breath forth a noxious vapour of cone dimensions 3" long, 1" high and 2" base diameter. Creatures within this area are automatically infected with a random disease, and must also save versus poison or else be helpless with nausea for 1-4 rounds. The area of this breath attack remains highly infectious for a few days afterwards.

Once per round a greater vampire can: cause **sleep** as a spell (5 times per night), **knock** as spell, **hold portal** as spell (which will remain held for as long as the vampire stays within 6" and for 2-5 rounds afterwards; such held portals can still be broken down or dispelled as normal).

Finally I leave the last word to the most famous vampire hunter of all: Dr Van Helsing. Speaking of a certain vampire he said,

'...was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and most cunning of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest'. That mighty brain and iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us.'

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Good hunting!

Derrick Norton

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GamesFair '85 will be at Reading University on Friday to Sunday **29-31 March**. See the form on p33 of this magazine for more information.

Yorcon takes place **5-8 April** at Dragonara and Queens hotels, Leeds. Guest of Honour will be author Gregory Benford. Enquiries to: Christine Donaldson, 46 Colwyn Rd, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY.

This year's **Eurocon** takes place in Eindhoven on **12-14 April**. There will be frp and wargames, Diplomacy championship etc. For further details write to: Jan Feringa, Radijsstraat 11B, 9741 BJ Broningen, Netherlands.

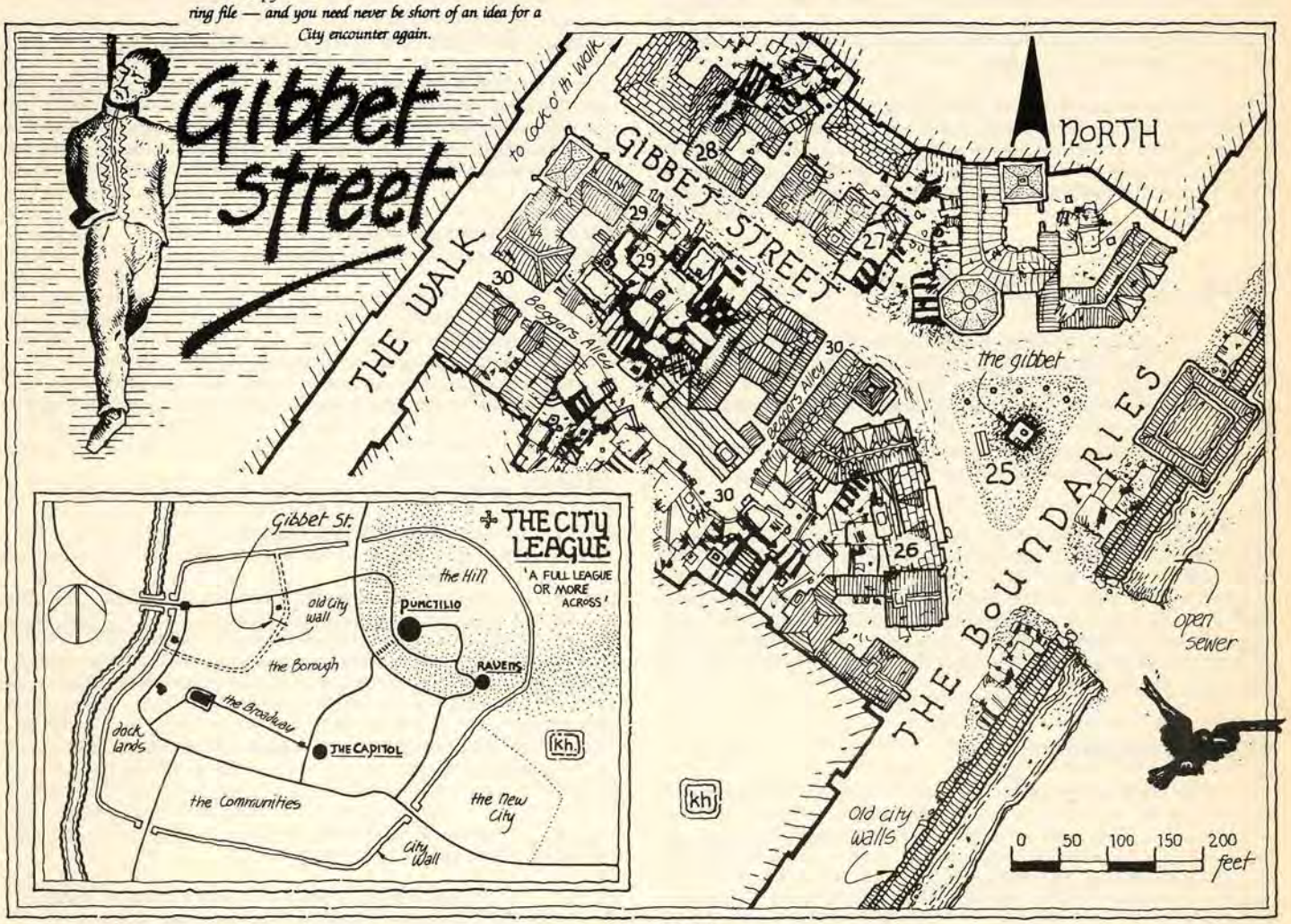
Sol III 85 will be at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool from **3rd to 6th May**. Confirmed guests include Mark Lenard (Sarek) and SF authors James White and Lisa Tuttle. Fee £15 for weekend. Registration forms and further details available from 39 Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park, London E12. Please enclose a SSAE.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

PELINORE

THE CITY LEAGUE

Deep in the heart of Pelinore has grown the City League: a mighty hive of humanity, offering everything an adventurer could desire. Each month IMAGINE magazine presents a few buildings from within the City; describes their inhabitants; and offers one or two ideas for adventures. This provides an ideal campaign base for the DM who can collect these articles and steadily build them up into the most comprehensive campaign setting available. Copy them, or cut them out and store them in a ring file — and you need never be short of an idea for a City encounter again.



by Brian Garrod

Gibbet Street is in one of the oldest and most squalid areas of the city. The inhabitants are very poor and most of them suffer from illness or disability. The most common means of turning a penny are peddling, begging, trickery and straightforward theft. The main feature of the street is the gibbet — still used for unofficial hangings. This gibbet, its frequent occupants and the standards of behaviour of the residents mean that this is an area usually avoided. It was not always so, as the street has seen better times, though they were long ago. Now the paving is cracked and mud and dirt lie everywhere. Beggars Alley leads off from Gibbet Street and curves round to meet the Walk (**14**). Once it merely provided a rear entrance to some of the houses on Gibbet Street now it is one of the most dangerous thoroughfares in the League. If the beggars, drunks, pimps, thieves and assassins don't get you then you'll probably contract a deadly disease from the piles of uncleared sewage. There are two rules and two rules only observed by all the inhabitants of this area. The first is that no-one shall touch a victim of the gibbet and the second is that no-one shall touch or desecrate the death-masks hung on poles by the gibbet. Woe betide any stranger who breaks these rules as the only punishment in these parts is death by hanging!

25. The Gibbet and the Mask-Poles

At the end of the street stands a gibbet. Stark and bare, its very shape is a brooding menace. Because of it the whole street seems to be in permanent shadow. It is dominant far beyond its size. Alongside it are five mask-poles upon which hang the death-masks of recent victims. These are horrible enough in principle, but their manufacturer — Daxol (**26a**) — is so skilled they take on an unwholesome menace of their own. Their presence casts a pall of gloom on an already unhappy scene.

26. Mask Workshop

A great tradition of the City League is the death-mask. Even convicted criminals are accorded the honour and this mask shop prepares masks for those hung on the gibbet. Making a mask is a highly skilled job and — carefully applied with make-up — it is almost indistinguishable from life. The process involves pouring hot wax over the face to be copied, so only dead faces can be done. Copies of masks can be bought for 20gp but the knowledge of how to apply the make-up correctly can only be bought for a minimum of 250gp — assuming Daxol Nabrish likes you.

26a Daxol Nabrish; M; T7; N; Dagger; AC 7; hp 21/32

H		
S	12	☐ *Willowy, old, brown clothing with short leather apron*
I	13	☐ *Mask-maker and Pilferer/Sharper*
W	9	☐ *Tight-lipped, tight-fisted, suspicious*
D	17	☐ *Knows the local militia and court (they don't know he's a thief); member of the local thieves' guild; no friends; father of Arandul (**26b**) whom he watches through the window*
C	15	
Ch	6	

26b Arandul Nabrish; M; T4; N/CN; Shortsword; AC 7; hp 16/20

H		
S	8	☐ *Cheerful countenance; green clothes, red cap with feather*
I	13	☐ *Burglar/Robber and part-time minstrel*
W	8	☐ *Arrogant, proud and quick-witted*
D	17	☐ *Member of the local thieves' guild; Arandul sits singing by the gibbet picking the pockets of passers-by; if detected he flees to Beggars Alley; son of Daxol (**26b**)*
C	16	
Ch	16	

27. Mandren the Lunatic

Mandren's hovel would appear unoccupied were it not for the foul smell and unholy noises that come from within. Mandren spends most of her life eking out a pathetic existence selling water. Periodically she has fits that cause her to rant and scream and assault anyone within reach. During these fits the locals often call in guards from the nearby madhouse to restrain her. This is not a popular job as Mandren trained as a magic user and on a scrap of paper hidden in her hovel she has the spell **stinking cloud** and periodically her lunacy takes the form of learning this spell and casting it up and down the alley. Those who save against the spell and stagger out of the cloud (taking a round to recover) will get mugged as they emerge!

*Basic - **Stinking Cloud** - New Spell (second level): casting the spell causes a cloud of foul fumes to appear of area 20'x20'x20' that lasts six rounds per level of MU. Anyone in the cloud must save vs Poison or lie helpless, retching for 1d4+1 rounds. Those who save run out of the cloud but must spend one round helpless recovering from the fumes. Range: 30' Duration: 6 rounds/level*

27a Mandren the Lunatic; F; MU3; C/CN;
Bite (D1-4); AC 9/10; hp 12

H
S 9 ☐ *Dressed in loose, filthy, torn rags; wild eyes and hair; would be beautiful if cleaned up and tamed*
I 4 (16) ☐ *Water Seller, Conjurer, Lunatic*
W 3 (9) ☐ *Stunned and sullen but coherent and reasonable between attacks*
D 11 ☐ *No-one admits to knowing her but rumours abound that she is the sister of a high-born lady*
C 16
Ch 14

27b&c If the asylum has sent any guards to look after Mandren they will be Gragen Axbow (F4 hp18/26 AC5 Broadsword) and Lolden Beltow (F3 hp16/18 AC5 Longsword). These are basically honest types who are well known locally and somewhat respected as they do not interfere unnecessarily in local activities. Visitors looking to them for aid are likely to see them whistling casually and examining carefully the eaves of a nearby building. Both love money, however, and (tragically) Gragen loves Mandren.

28. Weaponsmiths

Once a thriving business, this weaponsmith's shop is now boarded up with 'For Sale' signs on it. The two weaponsmiths (Dokas and Milly) were murdered by their scheming daughter (Negalmis) who later disappeared in mysterious circumstances. No-one locally dares enter the premises as they are rumoured to be haunted. As a consequence most of the stock remains, stacked neatly in the store, including 2 **longswords +1**, 4 **daggers +1**, 1 **scimitar +2** and 4 **darts +2**. Unfortunately the building really is haunted as Dokas and Milly have become wraiths and Negalmis has become a spectre. For those who are interested the title deeds can be bought from Daxol Nabrish (**26a**) for 7500gp. If players reopen the shop they will discover that Negalmis was not much of a business woman as she died owing over 2000gp in various debts to local traders.

29. The Friendly Neighbours

Wadren is a teenager whose parents have recently died leaving him the house they lived in but little else. He is struggling to make a living breeding pigs — not without success. His next-door-neighbour, Holman, covets these pigs and Wadren's house. Holman sometimes resorts to stealing Wadren's piglets, killing them and selling them. Often Wadren manages to rescue them. It is quite likely a party walking along Gibbet Street will observe this ritual being acted out. Holman chasing Wadren (who is clutching a piglet under his arm) down the street and shouting, "Stop, pig-napper! Stop that boy!" Wadren will swear his innocence and is bright enough to call on the Butchers Guild Militia (who know him) to come to his aid if a party should side against him.

29a Holman; M; F3; C/CE;
Longsword; AC 7/8; hp 14/17

H/½
S 16 ☐ *Portly, ugly; mauve smock and brown breeches*
I 10 ☐ *Layabout and slob, Swordmaster/Swordsman*
W 11 ☐ *Convincing liar, ingratiating, smarmy, covetous, quick tempered and rude*
D 9
C 9 ☐ *Not the sort to have many friends*
Ch 5

29b Wadren; M; Fr1; L/NG;
No weapon; AC 9/10; hp 3/4

H
S 12 ☐ *Slight, scruffy; yellow smock*
I 14 ☐ *Pig-breeder*
W 11 ☐ *Pleasant, wary, determined, ambitious*
D 13 ☐ *Well known locally*
C 9
Ch 11

30. Citizens of Beggars Alley

Up and down the alley many unsavoury (and some dangerous) people ply their trade. Most of them are NM/F0, AC 9/10, 2hp, while the rest are a mixture of low-level thieves and first level freemen. They will be found leaning up against doorposts, squabbling over heaps of rubbish or lurking in shadows waiting for unwary travellers.

30a Budlock; M; F1; N;
Dagger; AC 9/10; hp 7/10

H
S 11 ☐ *Dishevelled brown rags, crutch; filthy hair tied in pony tail with string*
I 14 ☐ *Beggar*
W 9 ☐ *Convincing actor, greedy, amoral*
D 11 ☐ *Well known character down the alley; feigns pathetic lameness to beg alms and runs off cackling if any are given*
C 15
Ch 7

30b Ishbone; M; E3/F-MU3; N/NE;
Longsword; AC 6/7; hp 10/12

E
S 17 ☐ *Tall, lean; wears green leathers*
I 16 ☐ *"Toll" keeper, Swordmaster Conjurer/Swordsman-Conjurer*
W 6 ☐ *Cocky, short-tempered, brave and aggressive*
D 15 ☐ *Self-appointed leader of the local ruffians, Fit (**30d**) allows him this deceit; husband of Rarad (**30c**); ruthlessly exacts tolls from any who wander down the alley - the amount of toll varies according to the amount Ishbone thinks he can exact*
C 11
Ch 12

Spell Book
D&D 1 (1*, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12*) AD&D 1(3*, 6, 12, 15, 16, 22, 29*)
2 (3, 4, 6, 7*) 2(5, 6, 10, 12*)

30c Rarad; F; E3/F-MU3; N/NE;
Longsword; AC 9/10; hp 10/12

E
S 12 ☐ *Drab grey dress brightened by many coloured scarves*
I 12 ☐ *Swordmaster Conjurer/Swordswoman-Conjurer*
W 13 ☐ *Fickle, wayward, opportunist*
D 13 ☐ *Very well known locally; admired by all; wife of Ishbone (**30d**)*
C 9
Ch 17

Spell Book
D&D 1 (5*, 7, 9, 10, 11*, 12) AD&D 1(15*, 20, 22, 23, 25*, 29)
2 (2, 3, 4*, 8, 10) 2(4, 5, 6*, 13, 22)

30d Fit; M; F6/A6; C/LE;
Poisoned dagger; AC -1/-2; hp 42/34

H
S 12 ☐ *Short and skinny; chain mail under grubby rags; eye-patch and white stick*
I 13 ☐ *Myrmidon/Killer*
W 10 ☐ *Shrewd, cunning, sophisticated, efficient*
D 18 ☐ *Known as a not-very-successful beggar; has connections with the Knights Ocular; in AD&D: leader of local assassins cell*
C 16
Ch 8

30e Lara; F; T4; C/CE;
Longsword and garrot; AC 9/10; hp 11/13

G
S 14 ☐ *Squat, ugly and unpleasant; filthy rags; always wears dull red scarf to cover angry scar around neck from attempted lynching*
I 7 ☐ *Burglar/Robber*
W 6 ☐ *Mean, uncompromising, vindictive*
D 12 ☐ *Idolised locally as a vicious back-stabber; leads a small gang of gnomish thieves in smash and grab raids against shops in neighbouring districts*
C 13
Ch 7

GUILDS IN THE CITY LEAGUE

Over the millennia the City League, like all societies, has developed a system whereby tradesmen and women have formed groups to protect their own interests. These groups are known as Guilds. A Guild is formed to perform three important functions. Firstly, and most widely advertised, to maintain standards of production and quality — this is not a spurious reason as the reputation of a guild is very valuable. Secondly to provide an environment in which young people can be trained in the arts and sciences of the trade. And thirdly to keep secret some of the more important skills so that the sanctity of the Guild is preserved. Most trades and professions are represented by a guild and it is a mark of the antiquity and stability of a society how extensive and effective its system of guilds is. It hardly needs saying that trying to find a non-guilded tradesman in the League is like looking for hairs on a beholder — there aren't any!

The guilds are of various shapes and sizes. Some, such as the Seamen, have thousands of members and lax discipline and short apprenticeships. Others, such as the Perfumers, have few members with tightly guarded trade secrets and apprenticeships of such length only gnomes or dwarves can spare the time. Likewise, the political influence of the Guilds varies; in the past the Courtesans, Cartographers and Thespians, have been so powerful as to attract the hostility of the Katar.

Even listing and recording the huge number of guilds, much less categorising them, is a vast task. Felix Pursuivant of the Guild of Heralds did at least attempt it. The following are some extracts from that list.

Guilds Of The City League

Amalgamated Guild of Apothecaries and Alchemists

Their title is the guild members' idea of a joke. Even so this is a large and very important guild. So important that it has split into many factions and is sponsored by many nobles and merchants. Once every five years local guild fathers and mothers meet to discuss developments in their field. These meetings are simply an excuse for a grand slanging match — the real spread of information is by the regular movement of apprentices from master to mistress and back again through bribery and deals. Any magic user worth his or her salt has a hold over some member of this guild.

Assassins

Run on classic lines this guild is in truth a series of cells linked in some mysterious, unknown way. The Assassins are much weaker in the City League than in other comparable urban locations, however, since so many professional killers end up as members or hirelings of the Knights Ocular.

Brewers

Although mostly concerned with normal brewing, the Guild also gets involved in the concoction of various arcane alcoholic potions used for diverse means by, for example, the Courtesans (qv).

Cartographers

A very small, discrete group who prepare maps and charts. Maps are usually available only on commission. The Cartographers have dozens of secret drawings and tomes that they use for their researches hidden away in a site known only to a few, very senior, members of the guild. They have close ties with the Courtesans (qv) and the Heralds (qv). Because of the powerful information they conceal the Cartographers are closely guarded and monitored by the Knights Ocular.

Courtesans

This large and powerful guild is steeped in antiquity and lore and is governed by rigid rules of conduct and discretion. It is said that no secret is unknown to the guild leaders. Because of this they work with two other guilds that control information — the Cartographers (qv) and the Heralds (qv). These three guilds are known within the League as the Triple Alliance and they wield huge amounts of power. The Courtesans also control several other, lesser, guilds such as the streetwalkers and the courtiers. They are extremely wealthy, and, at the top, benefit from the patronage of the Katar's court.

Heralds

Heralds are, technically, a subsidiary guild within the huge continent-spanning Guild of Messengers and Couriers. The Heralds maintain this fiction as it suits their purposes though they are actually an Honourable and Secret Order that pre-dates the City League and most recorded history. This is mostly due to the fact that the Heralds are responsible for recording history. They have vast stores in which can be found maps, charts, linealogies, dynasties and many, many forgotten contracts. They work closely with the Cartographers (qv) and the Courtesans (qv). See **IMAGINE** #16 for more details.

Linkboys

Linkboys are the men and women who hire themselves out at night to light travellers and revellers home after dark. Although in appearance they are lowly and in behaviour humble in actuality they are an important link in the information gathering processes that permeate the League. Consequently they have connections with Assassins (qv), Thieves (qv), Courtesans (qv) and Heralds (qv) — though not the Cartographers (qv), who find them a little rough.

Locksmiths

Having split away from the ranks of the Farriers and Armourers, in a struggle that was something close to civil war, the Locksmiths have become the League's tightest-knit and most ruthless guild. By bitter experience, they have discovered that no-one will buy locks or other devices if there is any suspicion that another party knows the secret of that lock, or owns a duplicate key. As a consequence, the Guild exercises two policies. First, it runs a savage campaign of brutality and political corruption aimed at the Thieves' Guild. Second, there is an unbreakable Guild law that nothing is ever commited to paper, and many locksmiths have even learned the discipline of forgetting the details of a lock as soon as it is made. The Guild Militia of the Locksmiths is a barbaric organisation, notorious for the way it deals with members who flout this rule. Even so, there are individuals who will sell the right kind of information for the right price — if you know where to look.

Lorists and Sages

This is probably the most loosely organised of all the guilds as its members tend to be very independently minded people. Lorists and Sages tend to deal with non-political information (unlike the Heralds, Courtesans and Cartographers who deal with little else).

Scribes and Lexicographers

This guild controls all translations and writings. Their power has not been changed by the invention of maniacal contraptions that transfer writing mechanically as they have taken care to include the building and operation of all such machines within their control.

Thespians (including Harpers, Minstrels and Jesters)

This is another huge guild with branches sprawling hither and thither. It is not well organised or rigidly controlled and yet its leaders (and the leaders of the subsidiary Guilds) keep a close watch on how it behaves through a complex and efficient spy network. Much useful political information can be gathered by the Guild and so the Katar and The Knights Ocular (as well as the Thieves' and Assassins' Guilds) have their own spies planted within it.

A tradition of the City is that any adventurer who wants to ensure temporary notoriety should pay a Harper to write and perform songs that extol the buyer's bravery and virtue (irrespective of the facts). For as little as a few gold pieces, an 'off-the-peg' ditty can be amended to include the character's name in a tavern for an evening, but for a mere 1000gp, that same adventurer could have a 'made-to-measure' story sung throughout the inns and taverns of a whole district. It's a great way to 'advertise' that your services are for hire, and is in many ways the only way to get a commission from the Punctilio. Equally, for a similar sum, a rather less complimentary song could be sung about a rival in all the same places. It should be borne in mind that such songs could inadvertently draw the attention of undesirable elements to adventurers at awkward moments. Never have your story told when you need a few weeks of rest!

Thieves

The City is full of Thieves' Guilds, separated by area and alignment, divided by petty jealousies and bitter enmity, and hunted by the militias of rival guilds and the forces of the Katar. No two guilds have quite the same organisation, though most seem to be dominated by a single powerful character. One thing they do all have in common is a system of safe houses unique to that guild. A safe house is any place that will hide a fugitive thief who can provide the right password. They may be any normal trader's shop, or a private dwelling, and are normally identified by a symbol or mark visible from the street that can be recognised by a member of the guild. These properties will often have 'priest-holes' or secret tunnels. During periods of cooperation guilds may temporarily exchange information about marks or passwords — each changing their codes once the cooperation is ended — but woe betide thieves who try to take refuge in a house that does not recognise them!

Other guilds within the City League include:

Bakers, Butchers, Candlemakers, Chandlers, Charcoalers, Clogmakers, Clothiers (a direct subsidiary of the Cerwyn Clothiers Guild), Cobblers, Coopers, Embalmers (cremation is widely practised in most parts of the City these days, and this Guild is declining rapidly), Gladiators (not technically a Guild, but a Brotherhood of participating fighters), Glassworkers, Hideworkers, Innkeepers, Jewellers (the League's reputation for jewellery is legend), Limners, Litigants and Lawyers (a vast guild serving the hideously complicated legal system — see #18), Longshoreman, Masons, Mercantylers, Metalsmiths, Millers, Money-lenders (dominated by a dwarven hierarchy), Ostlers, Perfumers, Physicians, Pilots, Potters, Saddlers, Salters, Smokers and Picklers, Seamen (a powerful Guild, utterly loyal to the Katar), Shipwrights and Ropemakers, Spinners, Tentmakers, Thatchers, Timberwrights, Turners, Weaponsmiths, Weavers, Wheelwrights.

MONSTER MONEY

A new adventure format for the Pelinore campaign

In the last issue of **IMAGINE** magazine, details of the Arena were published, explaining how this, and smaller stadiums around the City League, were used for execution and gladiatorial contests. A particular favourite of the massive population of the City is to see lightly armed gladiators in combat with various nasty beasties. Several player-characters might find the life of the Arena something they can't resist, and will plunge into a career which will either vault them into fame and wealth as a favourite of the crowd, or will see them crippled or killed upon the sand.

It's a dangerous business. Sooner or later, the most successful gladiator is going to find the crowd beginning to tire of constant victories; tougher and tougher monsters will have to be fought, at ever increasing odds. And eventually there will come a time when a fighter's wealthy patron will fix up a match that is a little too much, and will bet on the opposition; and what price your fame and glory then?

No, for the smart adventurer, there is really only one choice. If you can't make money out of the Arena by fighting in it, perhaps you can find yourself filling another of its pressing needs.

Running an Arena isn't easy. Apart from controlling the staff and maintaining the buildings, there is the perennial problem of acquiring enough interesting monsters to please the masses — and eat the gladiators. Not only does this pose a problem to the Arena management, it also gives the DM a wonderful new opportunity; let the player-characters try to *capture* the monsters they meet instead of killing them, so that they can sell them to the Arena.

Using this format, those boring hack-and-slay sessions will be gone forever, as the players will be struggling to keep the monster not only alive, but in good working order so as to get the best possible price for it. Capturing a really tough, combat-worthy monster could be worth more to the party than the treasure it was guarding. You could even get the characters going on monster hunts, as they develop clever techniques for capturing particular beasts. As with all nice things, however, beware of letting things get out of hand — adopt these restrictions:

> The Arena doesn't want boring monsters — who is going to pay to watch a bucket of green slime?
> The Arena doesn't want super-powerful monsters — who is going to pay to get turned to stone by a basilisk?
> The Arena doesn't want unfettered aerial monsters — who is going to pay to watch a harpie fly away?
> The Arena doesn't want damaged monsters — who is going to pay to see the *coup de grace* given to a land shark on 1hp.

The Arena's rate of payment was strictly laid down by Enactment XXXIV, and is monitored by the court officials. The same rate covers all the Arenas in the City League, although it is common practice for the smaller, district arenas to cheat on the rate, offering as little as one third of the rate below. The DM should calculate payment with regard to the xp values of the monsters captured and the frequency with which the monster can be expected to be found in the locality. In the Advanced game, this can refer to whether the monster is common, uncommon, rare or very rare (unique monsters should never be captured, and DMs who allow it to happen should end up in the Arena having to face them!). In the Basic game, the DM will have to judge how rare a monster is before applying the modifiers.

The payment received is:

Common monsters	½ x xp value
Uncommon monsters	1 x xp value
Rare monsters	5 x xp value
Very rare monsters	10 x xp value

These payments should be modified by the amount of damage done at the time it is presented at the Arena. Calculate the percentage damage done to the monster and pay only that percentage of the maximum price.
Example: A neo-otyugh (rare)
* xp value = 1500+15/hp = 1500+(15x54) = 2310xp
* monetary value = xp value x rarity value = 2310 x 5 = 11,550gp
* damage % = (actual damage/total hps) x 100 = (32/54) x 100 = 59.26%
* cash received = monetary value x damage % = 11,550 x 59% = 6814gp

This would probably be rounded off to 6800gp. The calculation process is exactly the same for the Basic game, except that the DM must estimate the rarity of the monster. Don't make them all Very Rare just to avoid displeasing the players!

The xp values for monsters can be found with the other stats in the **FIEND FOLIO® Tome** and **Monster Manual II**, on pages 196-215 of the **Dungeon Masters Guide** or calculated using the table on page 85 of the DMG. Basic game xp values are normally given with the monster stats, or can be worked out from the relevant table in the rulebook. None of the money received in this way counts towards xps (unless you are using a 'buying' system similar to the one outlined in **What To Do With A Dragon's Treasure — IMAGINE magazine #17**). The party should, however, get the same experience for capturing the monster as they would have had they killed it.

One last point. There isn't an unlimited demand for monsters in the Arenas. At each one that the party visits, the DM should make a roll to decide whether the manager is interested in the offer: perhaps allowing a 25% chance of the monster(s) being rejected. The adventurers will then have to sell elsewhere (and the smaller District Arenas will always cheat on the price), or make a sensible effort of disposing of the beast. And should they start making too much money from the enterprise, then the following gentleman and his numerous hirelings will doubtlessly take a very close interest.

31a **Gross an Creer**; M; F8; N;
Battleaxe +3; AC -2/-1; hp 64/72

Dw	
S 17	☐ *Massive brute, wears blue tunic and breeches, furs and* ***chain mail+3****, carries* ***shield +2***
I 16	
W 9	☐ *Animal Procurer*
D 8	☐ *Selfish, thug-like, loathsome, but very shrewd*
C 18	☐ *Knows the buyers at all the Arenas and has the ear of*
Ch 5	*several guild chiefs. Nearly everyone in the City will at least know his name*

31b&c Gross' two lieutenants will probably be the first to call, playing dirty tricks on the adventurers — loosing their captured creatures, wrecking their rooms while they are out. Nathes and Ryar of Kosre are T4, AC 6, hp 10/12, and use poisoned daggers if cornered.

Tom Kirby

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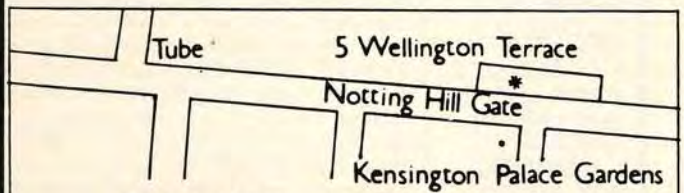

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. . . . which is surrounded by trees. You see a pool of sparkling water and bend to drink some. As you drink, you hear an ominous rustle coming from the bushes behind you. Looking at the pool you notice something — *YOU CANNOT SEE YOUR REFLECTION!!*

The beating of your heart grows louder and faster. You must do something — but what?

Will you —

a) Dive into the Pool? (Turn to page **24**)

b) Draw your weapon and turn to face the direction the sound came from? (Turn to page **37**)

c) Faint? (Turn to page **38**)

Turn to the page indicated in one of the above options to find the results of your decision.

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ILLUMINATIONS

Cancelling The Debt

I have had cause to remonstrate with Fantasy Games Unlimited of New York in this column from time to time because of the lack of back-up material for their popular **Bushido** rpg. They have made the first step towards reinstating themselves in my favour by approving a mini-adventure designed in Britain. This is **Takshido's Debt**, an entertaining little caper with the characteristic Bushido twist somewhere in the tail area. Steve Bell is the writer, Chaotic Intellect Products edited and Games of Liverpool are the publishers. Price is 95p, which seems very fair to me. Coinciding with this long overdue addition, the price of Bushido itself has been reduced to £7.95 in Britain. The popularity of the game over here has allowed Games of Liverpool, who import it, to take nearly half of this year's print run, and thus negotiate a price very favourable to UK purchasers.

FGU have been busy elsewhere, releasing **Empire Karo**, an adventure for **Aftermath**. The setting is Cairo, Illinois (pronounced 'Karo' by its inhabitants) 50 years after a World War. The designer tells us that due to Arms Control negotiations, the nuclear weaponry available to the superpowers was severely limited by the time WWIII occurred in the year 2000. However, they more than made up for this by the use of Chemical and Biological weapons.... That's the trouble with a game like Aftermath, the rationale behind the play is so depressing. Still, if post-holocaust society interests you, Empire Karo is probably just what you are looking for. Price £4.20.

Cut Short

Standard Games' figures for use in conjunction with their **Cry Havoc** game are now on sale. There are half a dozen or so, at around 31p each foot figure, depicting various medieval types modelled on those shown on the game counters. Very nice they are too, although the horses are a bit lumpish. Standard intend bringing out some Japanese figures to complement their **Samurai Blades** game in the near future. No word yet on Standard's 'state of the art' new game — it's beginning to sound like T2....

Blowing in the Wind

Iron Crown Enterprises have released a new, expanded version of their **Iron Wind** fantasy role-playing module. It is the first book in the **Loremaster** series, which is intended to be a set of modules each depicting a different part of the world, Loremaster. The modules are specifically designed to operate with ICE's own **Rolemaster** frp system, although ICE will provide conversion notes to other systems on request. This is a source book rather than a scenario book, impressively detailed and excellently produced.

Colour Spray

Chris Harvey tells me that the promised colour cover **T&T** modules are now becoming available. At the time of writing, the following have appeared: **Death Trap Equalizer** at £4.50, **Naked Doom** at £3.95, and **Captif d'Yvoire** at £3.95. The last named is a new one on me, and appears — unless I am mistaken — to have a Gallic connection. Each of these modules contains a two page summary of the T&T rules which is specific to that particular module. I think this means that you could run the module just with the aid of the summary it contains, but to play others, or to design your own, you will require the full rules.

Entente Cordiale

Talking of Gallic Connections, I see that Jeux Descartes of Paris are publishing a French translation of **Call of Cthulhu**. Following on, as it does, from the French translations of the **D&D®** and **T&T** games, this further illustrates the growing interest in rpgs in France. There is also an appreciable increase in players in Germany, where the magazine **Drache** fills the same kind of niche that **Jeux & Strategie** and **Casus Belli** fill in France. Ulrich Kaiser and Thomas Kratz visited the IMAGINE magazine editorial dungeon earlier in the year, while Didier Guiserix of Casus Belli was to be seen at **Gamesday**. Adventure gaming now has firm roots throughout north-west Europe, and is all the stronger for its international acceptance. Good gaming, bons jeuxes and gute spiele to all our friends in Europe.

The Hero Keeps Going

Issues 3 & 4 of **Heroes**, the unashamed house magazine for Avalon Hill and Victory Games, have come among us. Issue 3 has lots of stuff on the **James Bond** game, **Lords of Creation, Runequest 3, Powers and Perils** and **Mystic Wood**. Issue 4 has much material for the James Bond game, Lords of Creation, Runequest 3.... It may be relatively easy to predict the contents of issue 5, but then Heroes does not pretend to do anything but support Avalon Hill/Victory games and certainly the material it provides is good quality (apart from the illustrations, which are to the same standard as in AH games, ie below average). There is an RQ3 scenario in issue 4 called **The Wolfrunners** which looks, on a cursory examination, to be worth the purchase price on its own. Always assuming, of course, that you are an RQ player....

Masters of the Game

Gamelords Ltd of Maryland have been steadily revamping their products, adding colour covers and the like to make them more attractive. Looking at what they now have available, it seems as though they have been extending their range pretty steadily as well. They now have ten books in the **Thieves' Guild** series, four or five in the **Haven** series and several generic adventures for use with any frp system. These publications vary of course in value and quality, but one thing you can't fault Gamelords for is detail. They pack their books with great masses of it and any GM must benefit from a look through them. Regrettably, they are not terribly easy to find in Britain currently, but a bigger demand would rectify that. Get out there and hassle the manager of your nearest game shop immediately.

The Wild West End

Another US producer that you have to hunt for in the UK is West End Games. Their main output is historical boardgames but they have one or two titles which IMAGINE magazine readers may fancy. **Web & Starship** is a board game for 2 or 3 players featuring two sets of aliens battling for domination with poor old Earth in the middle. **Paranoia** is West End's role-

playing system, depicting a future dominated by a 'well-meaning, but deranged' computer; the players are cast in the role of the computer's elite agents. It is, say West End, a role-playing game of a 'darkly humorous future'.

The Last Enchantment

by Michael Moorcock

THE LAST ENCHANTMENT © 1978

Through the blue and hazy night ran a shuddering man. He clutched terror to him, his bloated eyes full of blood. First behind him and then seemingly ahead of him came the hungry chuckles, the high whispered words.

'*Here toothsome. Here sweetmeat.*'

He swerved in another direction, moaning. Like a huge husk he was, like a hollow ornament of thin bone, with his great, rolling head swaying on his shoulders resembling a captive balloon, the wet cavern of his wide mouth fully open and gasping, the yellow spikes of teeth clashing in his head.

Awkwardly he ran, sometimes scuttling like a wounded spider, something lurching, mooing to himself through the tall and ancient forest, his feet sinking into the carpet of wet, pungent bracken and rotting roots. He held in his hand, that long white, metal-coloured claw, a glowing black talisman, held it out and cried:

'Oh Teshwan — aid me, Teshwan. Aid me....'

In the sluggish brew that was the contents of his rolling skull a few words swam to the surface and seemed to lie there, moving with the tide of his mind. And the voice which spoke them was sardonic: 'How can Teshwan aid thee, little mortal?'

But this relic of disorientated flesh could not form a coherent thought; could not answer save to scream its fear. So Teshwan took his presence away and it was left to the horseman to find the horror-crazed man.

Elric of Melnibone heard the voice and recognized the name. He sensed other, more ominous denizens lurking about him in the forest.

Moodily he curled his hands about the reins of his mount and jerked its head, guiding it in the direction of the screams. He only casually considered aiding the man and he rode his horse toward him more from curiosity than anything. Elric was untroubled by the terrors that the forest

held, regarding them as another, more normal man might regard the omnipresent song of birds and the rustle of small rodents in the undergrowth.

Great tremblings shuddered through Slorg's ruined body and he still heard the sharp whisperings. Were they carried on the air or were they slithering about in his jellied brain?

He gasped as he turned and saw the white-faced horseman riding like a grim, handsome god into the moon-glazed glade.

The horseman's long, sharply delineated skull was leper-white, as if stripped of flesh, and his slightly slanting eyes gleamed crimson. He wore a jerkin of black velvet caught at the throat by a thin silver chain. His britches, too, were of black cloth, and his leather boots were high and shining. Over his shoulders was a high-collared cape of scarlet and a heavy longsword slapped at his side as he pulled his steed to a standstill. His long, flowing hair was as white as his face. The horseman was an albino.

The shock of confronting this new and more tangible figure jerked Slorg back into half-sanity, and broken words sidled from his lips.

'Who are you? Aid me! I beg you, aid me!'

Elric laughed lightly. 'Now why should I, my friend? Tell me that'

'I have been — been profaned — I am Slorg. I was once a man — but those....' He rocked his body and flung his rolling head backwards, the curved lids falling down over his bulging eyes. 'I have been profaned....'

Elric leaned forward on the pommel of his saddle and said lazily: 'This is none of my business, master Slorg.'

The great head darted forward, the eyes snapped open and Slorg's long lips writhed over his teeth like a camel's. 'Address me not by a mundane title! I am Siletah Slorg — Siletah of Oberlorn — rightfully — rightfully.'

The title was unknown to Elric.

'My apologies, O Siletah,' he mocked, 'for now I observe a man of rank.'

'A man no longer,' whispered Slorg and began to sob. 'Help me.'

'Are you, then, in danger?'

'Aye, danger — my kinsmen have set the Hungry Whisperers upon me, do you not hear them?'

And Elric cocked his head to listen. Yes, he heard sibilant voices now. *'Where are you, morsel?'*

'Oh, help me, help me,' begged Slorg and lurched toward Elric. The albino drew himself up and pulled his horse back.

'No closer,' he warned. 'I am Elric of Melnibone.'

Slorg's tattered face squeezed itself into a frown. 'Ah, the name and the face,' he mumbled to himself, 'the face and the name. Elric of Melnibone. Outcast.'

'Indeed,' smiled Elric, 'but no more than you, it seems. Now I must bid you farewell and suggest, by way of friendly advice, that you compose yourself soon. It is better to die with dignity, Siletah Slorg.'

'I have powers, outcast of Melnibone — I have powers, still! Help me and I will tell you secrets — such secrets!'

Elric waved a disdainful hand. A moonbeam caught for an instant the flash of the rare actorios ring which reposed on his finger. 'If you know me, then you should know that I am no merchant to bargain. I ask nothing, and give nothing. Farewell!'

'I warn you, Elric — I have one power left. I can send you screaming from this place — into another. It is the power which Teshwan gives to all his servants — it is the one he never takes back!'

'Why not send your hungry friends into this other place?'

'They are not human. But if you leave me, I shall lay my last enchantment upon you.'

Elric sighed. 'Your last, perhaps, but not the last or the first to be laid upon me. Now I must go and search for a quieter place than this where I can sleep undisturbed.'

He turned his horse and his back on the shaking remnant of a man and rode away.

He heard Slorg calling again as he entered another part of the forest, untainted by the Siletah or those he had termed the Hungry Whisperers.

'Teshwan — return! Return to do me one last service — a deed of vengeance — a part of our bargain, Teshwan!'

A short time later Elric heard a thin, wailing scream come flowing out of the night behind him and then the whole forest seemed alive with horrible laughter. Satiated, triumphant, chuckling.

His mood altered by his encounter, Elric rode through night, not caring to sleep, and came out of the forest in the morning, glad of the sight of the green plateau stretching ahead of him.

'Well,' he mused, 'Teshwan disdained to aid Slorg and it seems there is no enchantment on me. I am half regretful. Now Slorg resides in the bellies of those he feared and his soul's at home in Hell.'

Then the plateau changed quite suddenly to grey rock.

Swiftly Elric wheeled his horse. The plateau and the forest was behind him. He spurred his mount quickly forward and the plateau and forest faded away to leave a vast and lonely expanse of flat, grey stone. Above him the sun had disappeared and the sky was bright and white and cold.

'Now,' said Elric grimly into silence, 'it seems I was wrong in my assumption.'

The plateau — its atmosphere — reminded him of another environment in which he had once found himself. Then he remembered clearly a time years before when he and two companions had sought an ancient volume called the Dead God's Book. Their questing had led them to a cavern guarded at its entrance by the symbol of the Lords of Chaos. In that cavern they had discovered an underground sea which had had unnatural qualities. There was the same sense of a sardonically amused presence here as there had been in the Caverns of Chaos.

Teshwan was a Lord of Chaos.

Hastily Elric pulled his runesword *Stormbringer* from its thick scabbard.

The sword was dead.

Normally the blade, forged by unhuman smiths for Elric's royal ancestors, was alive with sentience — throbbing with the life force it had stolen from a hundred men and women whom Elric had slain. Once before it had been like this — in the Caverns of Chaos long ago.

Elric tightened his lips, then shrugged as he replaced the sword in its scabbard.

'In a world completely dominated by the Forces of Chaos,' he said, 'I cannot rely on the powers which normally aid me in my sorcery. Thank Arioch I have a good supply of drugs about me, or I would indeed be doomed.'

In earlier times Elric had relied on his soul-stealing runesword to give him the energy which, as an albino, he lacked intrinsically, but recently he had rediscovered a cleaner way of counteracting the deficiency, by taking herbs he had discovered in the Forest of Troos where many unlikely things grew, both flora and fauna.

'By my father's plague-infested bones,' he swore. 'I must find a way off this granite plain and discover who, if anyone, rules in this world. I have heard of the powers invested in Teshwan's worshippers — and I seem to remember a hint of why the Lords of Chaos confer such peculiar talents upon them.'

He shuddered.

He began to sing a ululating hate-song of old Melnibone. Elric's ancestors had been clever haters. And on he rode beneath the sunless sky.

He could not tell how much time had passed before he saw the figure standing out strongly against the featureless horizon.

Now on the flat waste of stone there were two points at which the monotony was broken.

Elric — white, black and scarlet on a grey gelding.

The morose man, black hair lying like a coat of lacquer on his rounded skull, dressed in green, a silver sword dangling in his right hand.

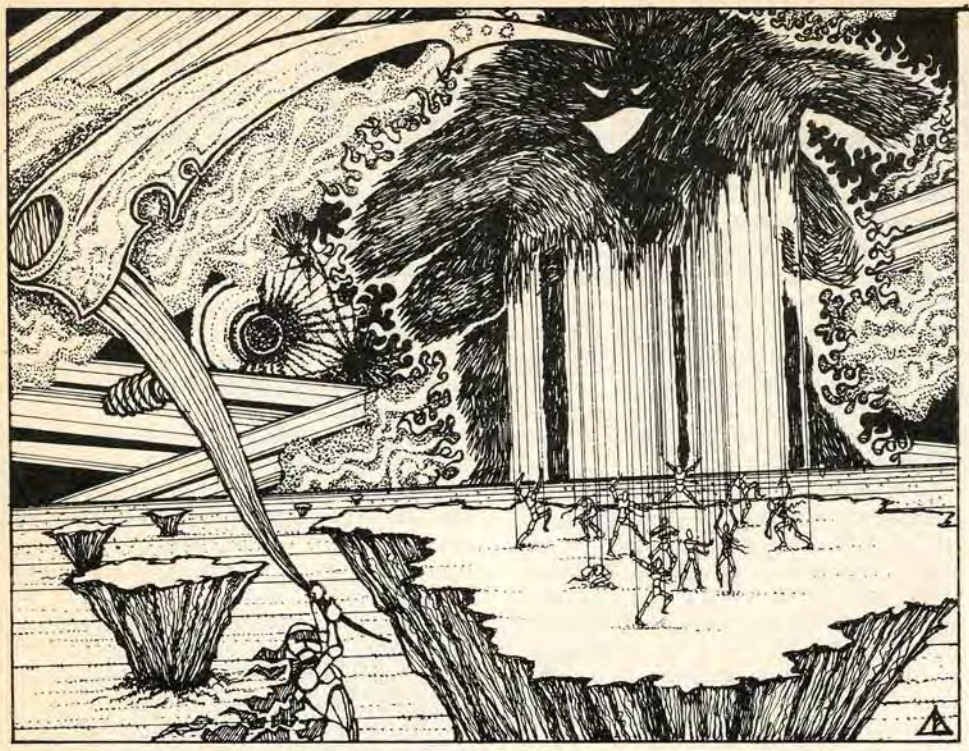
Elric approached the man who raised his eyes to regard the albino.

'This is a lonely place,' said the stranger, sucking at his fleshy cheeks, and he stared at the ground again.

'True,' replied Elric halting his horse. 'Is this your world or were you sent here, also?'

'Oh, it's my world,' said the man, without looking up. 'Where are you bound?'

'For nowhere, seeking something. Where do you journey?'



'I — oh, I go to Kaneloon for the Rites, of course.'

'All things, it is said, are possible in the World of Chaos,' Elric murmured, 'and yet this place seems unusually barren.'

The man looked up suddenly, and jerking his lips into a smile, laughed sharply.

'The Rites will alter that, stranger. Did you not know that this is the Time of The Change, when the Lords of Chaos rest before re-forming the world into a fresh variety of patterns?

'I did not know that,' said Elric, 'I have come here only recently.'

'You wish to stay?'

'No.'

'The Lords of Chaos are fickle. If you wished to stay they might not let you. Now that you are resolved to leave, they might keep you here. Farewell. You will find me therein!' He lifted his sword and pointed. A great palace of greenstone appeared at once. The man vanished.

'This, at least, will save me from boredom,' Elric said philosophically, and rode towards the palace.

The many-pinnacled building towered above him, its highest points hazy and seeming to possess many forms, shifting as if blown by a wind. At the great arch of the entrance a huge giant, semi-transparent, with a red, scintillating skin, blocked his way. Over the archway, as if hanging in the air above the giant's proud head, was the Symbol of Chaos, a circle which produced many arrows pointing in all directions.

'Who visits the Palace of Kaneloon at the Time of the Change?' enquired the giant in a voice like limbo's music.

'Your masters, I gather, know me — for they aided their servant Slorg in sending me hither. But tell them it is Elric of Melnibone, nonetheless — Elric, destroyer of dreaming Imrryr, kinslayer and outcast. They will know me.'

The giant appeared to shrink, to solidify and then to drift in a red mist, pouring like sentient smoke away from the portal and into the palace. And where he had been a portcullis manifested itself to guard the palace in the giant's absence.

Elric waited patiently until at length the portcullis vanished and the giant reformed himself.

'My masters order me to inform you that you may enter but that, having once come to the Palace of Kaneloon, you may never leave save under certain conditions.'

'Those conditions?'

'Of these they will tell you if you enter. Are you reckless — or will you stand pondering?'

'I'll avail myself of their generosity,' smiled Elric and spurred his nervous horse forward.

As he entered the courtyard, it appeared that the area within the palace was greater than that outside it. Not troubling to seek any mundane explanation for this phenomenon in a world dominated by the Lords of Chaos, Elric instead dismounted from his horse and walked for nearly a quarter of a mile until he reached the entrance of the main building. He climbed the steps swiftly and found himself in a vast hall which had walls of shifting flame.

In the glow from the fiery walls, there sat a table at the far end of the hall nine men — or at least, men or not, they had assumed the form of men. Different in facial characteristics, they all had the same sardonic air. In the centre of these nine was the one who had first addressed Elric. He leaned forward and spoke words carefully from his red lips.

'Greetings to you, mortal,' he said. 'You are the first for some time to sit with the Lords of Chaos at the Time of the Change. Behold — there are others who have had the privilege.'

A rent appeared in the wall of flame to disclose some thirty frozen human figures, some men and some women. They were petrified in positions of many kinds, but all had madness and terror in their eyes — and they were still alive, Elric knew.

He lifted his head.

'I would not be so impertinent, my lords, as to set myself beside you all insofar as powers are concerned, but you know that I am Elric of Melnibone and that my race is old; my deficient blood is the royal blood of the Kings of the Dreaming City. I have little pity or sentiment of any kind within me, for sentiment, whether love or hate, has served me badly in the past. I do not know what you require of me, and I thank you for your hospitality nonetheless, but I believe that I can conduct myself better in most ways than can any other mortal.'

'Let us hope so, Elric of Melnibone, for we would not wish you to fail, know that. Besides, you are not fully mortal as humans understand the word. Now, know you that I be Teshwan, and these need not be named and may be addressed singly or collectively by the name of Lords of Chaos.'

Elric bowed politely. 'Lord Teshwan — my Lords of Chaos.'

They returned his bow by slightly inclining their heads and broadening a trifle their sardonic, crooked smiles.

'Come,' said Teshwan briskly, 'sit here beside me and I will inform you of what we expect. You are more favoured than others have been, Elric, and, in truth, I welcomed the opportunity given me by my vengeful servant Slorg before he died.'

Elric climbed upon the dais and seated himself in the chair which appeared beside Teshwan. About him the walls of flame soared and tumbled, mumbled and roared. Sometimes shadow engulfed them, sometimes they were bathed in light. For a while they all sat in silence, pondering.

At last Teshwan spoke.

'Now,' he said at last, decisively. 'Here's the situation in which we have decided to place you. You may leave us only if you can create something which it has never occurred to us to create.'

'But you, surely, are the Masters of Creation?' said Elric in puzzlement. 'How may I do this?'

'Your first statement is not strictly true and in qualifying it I can give you a hint of the answer to your question. We of Chaos cannot make anything new — we may only experiment with combinations of that already created. Do you understand?'

'I do,' said Elric.

'Only the Greatest Power, of which we know little more than do humans, can create fresh conceptions. The Greatest Power holds both Law and Chaos in perpetual balance, making us war only so that the scale will not be tilted too far to one side. We wish not for power — only for variety. Thus every time we weary of our domain, we let our old creations fade and conceive new ones. If you can bring a fresh element to our domain, we shall free you. We create jokes and paradoxes. Conceive a better joke and a better paradox for our entertainment and you may leave here.'

'Surely you expect the impossible from me?'

'You alone may assess the truth of your question. Now, we begin.'

And Elric sat and watched, pondering his problem, as the great Lords of Creation began their mighty experiments.

The walls of fire slowly flickered and faded and again he saw the vast and barren plain of flat stone. Then the air darkened and a sighing wind began to moan over the plain. In the sky clouds blossomed in myriad shapes, alien, dark, unfamiliar, blacks and smoky orange, at the same time familiar....

The rock heaved like lava, became liquid, rearing upwards and as it reared it became giants, mountains, ancient beasts, monsters, gryphons, basilisks, chimerae, unicorns. Forests bloomed, their growths huge and exotic, elephants flew and great birds crushed boiling mountains beneath their feet. Fingers of brilliant colour climbed the sky, criss-crossing and blending. A flight of wildly singing lions fell from the firmament towards the forest and soared up again, their music lonely.

As the forest melted to become an ocean, a vast army of wizened homunculae came tramping from its depths dragging boats behind them. For a short while they marched over the seething waters and them, with precision, began, in ordered style, to climb into the flaring sky. When they had all left the ocean behind them, they righted their boats, set their sails, laughed and screamed and shouted, waved their arms, climbed into the boats and with fantastic speed streamed towards the horizon.

All creation tumbled and poured, malleable in the Domain of Chaos. All was gusto, craze and roaring terror, love, hate and music mingled.

The sky shook with multi-coloured mirth, blossoming white shot through with veins of blue and purple and black, searing red, splattered with spreading flowers of yellow, smeared, smeared, smeared with ghoulish green. Across this seathing backdrop sped bizarre shapes.

The Lords of Chaos shouted and sang their weird creation and Elric, shouting also, thought the frozen statues he had seen were weeping and laughing.

A grotesque combination of man and tree sent roots streaming towards the earth to tug mountains from the caverns it exposed and set them, peak first, like inverted pyraminds, into the ground. Upon the flat surfaces dancers appeared in bright rags which fluttered and flared around them. They were warped, unhuman, pale as dead beauty, grinning fixedly and then Elric saw the strings attached to their limbs and the silently laughing puppet master bearlike and gigantic, controlling them. From another direction sped a small, blind figure bearing a scythe that was a hundred times bigger than the bearer. With a sweep, he cut the strings and, with that action, the whole faded to be replaced by a gushing brilliance of green and orange flame which formed itself into streamers of zig-zagging disorder.

All this went on around them. The Lords of Chaos smiled to themselves now, as they created, but Elric frowned, watched with wonder and no little pleasure, but puzzled how he might emulate such feats.

For long hours the pageant of Chaos continued as the Lords took the elements of Elric's world and shook them about, turned them inside out, stood them on end, made startling, strange, beautiful, unholy combinations until they were satisfied with the constant movement of the scene about them, the perpetual shifting and changing. They had set a pattern that was no pattern, which would last until they became bored with their domain again and brought about another Time of Change.

Then their heads turned and all regarded Elric expectantly.

Teshwan said a trifle wearily. 'There — you have seen what we can do.'

'You are artists, indeed,' said Elric, 'and I am so amazed by what I have witnessed that I need a little time to think. Will you grant it me?'

'A little time — a little time only — we want to see what you prepare for us while the excitement is still upon us.'

And Elric placed his white albino's head upon his fist and thought deeply.

Many ideas occurred to him, only to be discarded, but at length he straightened his back and said: 'Give me the power to create and I will create.'

So Teshwan said smilingly 'You have the power — use it well. A joke and a paradox is all we require.'

'The reward for failure?'

'To be forever conscious.'

At this, Elric shivered and put his mind to concentrating, searching his memory until a manlike figure formed before him. Then he placed features on his head and clothes on its body until there stood before Elric and the Lords of Creation a perfect replica — of Elric.

Puzzledly, Teshwan said: 'This is splendid impertinence, I grant you — but this is nothing new — you already sit here beside us.'

'Indeed,' replied Elric, 'but look in the man's mind.'

They frowned and did as he asked. Then, smiling, they nodded. 'The paradox is good,' said Teshwan, 'and we see your point. We have, for an eternity, created the effect. You, in your pride and innocence have created the cause. In that man's mind was all that could ever exist.'

'You have noted the paradox?' asked Elric, anxious that the correct interpretation had been divulged.

'Of course. For though the mind contains the variety beloved of we of Chaos, it contains the order that those barren Lords of Law would foist on the world. Truly, young mortal, you have created everything with a stroke. And thank you, also, for the joke.

'Why, truly — the best joke is but a simple statement of truth. Farewell. Remember, friend mortal, that the Lords of Chaos are grateful to you.'

And with that, the whole domain faded away and Elric stood on the grassy plain. In the distance he observed the city of Bakshaan which had been his original destination, and nearby was his horse to take him there.

He mounted, flapped the reins, and, as the grey gelding broke into a trot, he said to himself, 'A joke indeed, but it is a pity that men do not laugh at it more often.'

Reluctantly, he headed for the city.

Michael Moorcock

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This month: THE ETERNAL CHAMPION (a romance) with the lead role played by Erekose, Elric, Hawkmoon & Corum

produced by DAVID HILL

Last night **The End of Time** stage company put on a new production — **THE ETERNAL CHAMPION**, by that up-and-coming, erudite manipulator of words, Michael Moorcock. For those who missed the opening night of this stunning extravaganza and masterpiece of surrealism, the programme notes are printed below for your gratification.

First night guests who honoured the management with their presence for the tour de force, included Catherine Cornelius, the twins Jherek Carnelian and Jerry Cornelius, Una Perrson, Oswald Bastable, Graf Ulrich von Bek, Lord Jagged, Karl Glogauer and Michael Kane. Apologies were accepted from John Daker, who was unavoidably detained on another plane whilst travelling the multiverse and Brut of Lashmar and John-ap-Rhys who both got caught up in Tanelorn and felt unable to leave.

All the world's a stage, a mighty multiverse;
And we the four in one are actors in its drama.

Surely the most enigmatic character to emerge from the sub-genre of Heroic Fantasy or Sword & Sorcery, written over the past 30 years is Michael Moorcock's immortal creation The Eternal Champion — The Four Who Are/Were One (Erekose, Elric, Hawkmoon and Corum).

The canon of dramas which tell the life story of this amazing persona number directly twenty-three episodes, and indirectly almost everything which Michael Moorcock has written over the years. This man is a prolific writer of prodigious proportions. A look inside the cover of any recent novel publication will reveal a list totalling well over sixty titles.

In the early seventies, the heyday of his Sword & Sorcery Romances, it was not unusual to see five new novels published during the course of a year. All this is a far cry from 1955 when, at the age of 16, Michael Moorcock planned the book **The Eternal Champion** and drafted parts of it.

Seven years elapsed before he turned to it again, and then, in the form of a twenty thousand word novelette, it was published by Ted Carnell in the magazine **Science Fiction**, of which he was the editor. The readership of June 1962 could not have guessed when they read the opening words that the novelette was to be the cornerstone of the Champion mythos, and simultaneously the key which would unlock the doors to a fuller understanding of many other books which the young author was yet to write.

"They called for me. That is all I really know.... and if, as wise men tell me, time is cyclic, then I shall one day return to the part of the cycle I know as the twentieth century AD in the Age of Men, for (it was no wish of mine) I am immortal."

Revised, rewritten and expanded, it finally appeared in 1969 in full-length novel format.

The basic concept behind the Champion mythos is that of a man involved in a conflict which is not of his choosing, asking or making. In the title book of the series, John Daker is thrust into another world where he materializes as Erekose — a once great hero of the land in

"a world which was Earth, but not the Earth of John Daker."

As Erekose, he has been summoned from the tomb to help the people defeat an enemy which is threatening to ravish their lands. Once summoned, he is caught up and trapped in a chain of events over which he has little or no control, and which he cannot alter.

The Eternal Champion in his various incarnations has to resign himself to his/this fate, namely that of avenging wrong.

The setting for the drama which unfolds over the twenty three acts is a series of universes within the multiverse (a term first formulated by the British writer John Cooper-Powys 1872-1963). In each of the multiverse worlds, the Champion, in one of his various incarnations, is involved in the conflict between Law (order) and Chaos (entropy).

In the American Dell edition of **The Eternal Champion**, Michael Moorcock took the opportunity to write a preface, and most illuminating it proved to be. A quote sums up succinctly what he wishes the term multiverse to represent.

"....a multitude of alternate universes intersecting sometime with our own, and to which, of course, our own belongs - an infinite number of slightly different versions of reality in which one is likely to come across a slightly different version of oneself."

The multiverse links different time zones, different races and different forms of reality, and as such it is a concept which is central to much of the writer's works.

The conflict between Law and Chaos is also central to the main drama. It occurs in one guise or another in all the romances and indeed, if not a central theme in his other works, it is almost always lurking on the periphery, threatening to move inwards.

Seeds of the multiverse concept, and also those of the opposing forces of Law and Chaos, were first sown by Michael Moorcock in his story **The Sundered Worlds**, first published in **Science Fiction Adventures** #29 (November 1962). It is now available in an expanded version in the book **The Blood Red Game**. By 1975 the seeds had grown into a rich harvest culminating in **The Quest For Tanelorn**.

This book brought the Eternal Champion mythos to a climax, and wove together many of the loose threads and strands from the previous works. By 1975, the multi-patterned tapestry was almost complete. Only a couple more scenes were to be added by the weaver over the ensuing years.

For those wishing to delve deeply into the birth and growth of the enigmatic Champion figure, a good place to start is by making a comparison of the original list of names in the 1962 version, with those of the 1969 novel. In the early version, John Daker in his fitful sleep hears voices calling out the following names:

"Shaleen, Artos, Brian, Umpata, Roland, Ilanth, Ulysseus, Alric."

All these voices:

"fled away down the ghostly rivers of my memory."

In the later version these names are replaced by:

"Corum Jhaelen Irsei, Aubec, Elric, Rackhir, Simon, Bastable, Cornelius, Asquinol and Hawkmoon."

By this time, Michael Moorcock knows in which direction his writing is going. All the characters he has written about, or is yet to explore more fully in the next few years, are woven into the Champion mythos tapestry.

In **Phoenix in Obsidian**, the second Champion novel published in 1970, the names of all of his characters feature even more prominently in the Champion's nightmares.

In the early sixties, the doomed prince Elric was written into the drama with more stories of the misanthropic figure being added over the next two decades.

By the mid-sixties, a new protagonist in the form of Dorian Hawkmoon-von-Koln, a dispossessed lord, is the central figure on stage throughout two trilogies. In the second, **The Chronicles of Castle Brass**, which culminates in **The Quest for Tanelorn**, Hawkmoon joins with the other incarnations in an attempt to destroy the sorcerers Agak and Gagak.

Then, by the early seventies and through to 1974, Prince Corum Jhaelen Irsei is the central protagonist of the six volumes, and his adventures only add to the complexities of the mythos.

The action of the drama shows each incarnation coming from a vastly different type of universe and time zone. The subject of Time could occupy many pages in its own right. One quotation from **The King of the Swords** illustrates its complexities:

"There is really no such thing as time you see. I remember what to you is the future."

Elric's land predates civilization. The backdrop for the drama, which revolves around this hero, is the fast-decaying ten thousand year empire of Melniboné —the Dragon Isle:

"Ravaged at last by the formless terror called Time, Melniboné fell and newer nations succeeded her: Ilmiora, Sheegoth, Maidahk, S'aalem. Then history began; India, China, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome – all these came after Melniboné. But none lasted ten thousand years."

(Dreaming City, Science Fantasy 1961)

The backdrop of the Corum dramas features the land of the last Vadhagh and Nhadragh peoples. Races who were soon to be ousted by Man

"....who in those days called himself Mabden."

The opening lines from the book **The Knight of the Swords** provides memorable lines for the reader. There is no doubt that Michael Moorcock writes not only imaginative works, but he also writes for the reader with imagination, who can build on what he is given.

"In those days there were oceans of light and cities in the skies, and flying beasts of bronze. There were herds of crimson cattle that roared and were taller than castles."

The stage set for the Hawkmoon dramas, by comparison, is one of a post-holocaust Earth:

"Then the Earth grew old, its landscapes mellowing and showing signs of age, its ways becoming whimsical and strange in the manner of a man in his last years."

(The Jewel In The Skull, 1969)

This landscape of a futuristic Earth in the multiverse, is familiar with European-sounding names; Granbretan, Londra, Kamarg, Turkia and Germania.

The land in which John Daker finds himself after being wrenched out of his own time-zone is one threatened by an age-old foe. The setting is the city of Necranal, which spreads for many miles around the base of a tall mountain with its ten thousand-windowed palace. Here he learns of the vow he has previously made to fight for humanity, if ever the Eldren Race were to dominate the nearby lands again. And later, like another incarnation, he betrays those he has previously aided. After leading Humanity into battle victory, he joins the enemy and Humanity on that planet is destroyed.

There is little doubt that the numerous stage sets for this dramatic production are extremely memorable.

Next, the cast who portray **The Eternal Champion**. Three who play the part of an incarnation, either at the outset of the first act, or within minutes of the curtain going up, are in some way maimed, or are found to be suffering from an incurable malady. Unlike other Sword & Sorcery productions which have graced the boards of the blood-soaked world stage, the cast of this drama are not sixteen stone, bronzed and muscle-bound wielders of the broadsword. Dorian Hawkmoon, who makes his entrance stage left, is in chains. Not an auspicious start for our hero. As such, he is a prisoner of Baron Meliadus, who has killed his father and is intent on world domination. A black jewel is inserted into Hawkmoon's forehead; this operates on the level of a miniature camera relaying back to Meliadus, every action comes across the multiverse stage made by Hawkmoon. Any step out of line, any hint of insubordination, and the jewel will be activated to implode.

Stage right we have Prince Corum, resplendant in his scarlet robe and silver hand. On returning to Castle Erorn, after finding his relatives butchered in other castles, he finds his own family massacred by the Mabden. He has lost his father, mother, sisters, uncle and cousins: all slain by the hand of Glandyth-a-Krae, the wicked villain of the plot. Revenge is the theme of the books, and early in the action Corum is captured by the Mabden and brutally tortured — an eye is burnt out and a hand is hacked off. These are later replaced by another sorcerer, after Corum is saved by a being from another plane. He is given a jewelled eye and a silver hand. When the patch is lifted from the eye, it enables the viewer to see into other planes, and to summon beings and creatures to aid him in battle. The silver hand senses danger before it arrives and is ruthless in slaying, even when Corum does not wish blood to flow. Here we have echoes of Hawkmoon's jewel and Elric's sword. Such acquisitions have to be paid for, and Corum finds himself pitted against three deities.

Enter, centre stage — Elric, the albino prince. There can be little doubt that this personification of the Eternal Champion is the favourite throughout the theatres in which he has appeared. Misanthropic Elric, doomed from the outset; betrayer and betrayed. Elric, who on making his debut, not only kills a heroine and spares a villain, but also destroys his own city, fleets of ships, and almost all of those he was supposed to be aiding.

Armed with Stormbringer, he bestrides the multiverse, a colossus relying on the "crutch" by his side to provide his very life force as he wreaks havoc in every kingdom he visits. Elric only survived childhood because of:

"magic potions, the chanting of runes and rare herbs."

(Elric of Melniboné)

Finding the sword Stormbringer:

"Elric felt fresh energy pour up his right arm and into his body. With it he needed no drugs, would never be weak again. In battle he would triumph. At peace he would rule with pride."

(Elric of Melniboné)

Soon after, he realises the price which has to be paid. This sword of hell has to be provided with the souls of other mortals if his own life force is to be supported and enriched.

For those wishing to delve into Elric's background and the literary origins of the

character, articles written by Michael Moorcock in 1963 and 1964 — **Elric of Melniboné** and **Elric** will provide interesting insights.

Of all the incarnations, it is Elric who dominates the multiverse. Elric, the hero of book, comic and role-playing game. Elric, full of gloom and self-pity, whose conscience will never allow him to forget that the sword which provides his very life force is also the cause of much human destruction, including his own personal loves and friends.

Finally, the action of this epic production. What a multitudinous number of plots and sub-plots litter the dramas of the Champion. Things are seldom what they seem; paradox and irony rear their heads in every act, and the action never eases until the very last sentence is read.

Always, the central action is in some way bound up with Law and Chaos, and linked to this are sub-plots of murdered families, revenge, sorcerous intrigue, quests and battles.

In one world of the multiverse, the hero battles with a deity of Chaos, whilst in another world the same deity has been defeated by another incarnation of the Champion. But being banished from one world does not weaken the power of the god in another. Arioch, Elric's patron, is a case in point.

Throughout the action, each hero encounters a multitude of creatures and enemies which have to be defeated if the final outcome is to be realized. Here again, Michael Moorcock is original in that the creations he sends out from the wings are by and large of his own making. This is not the case in the final Corum trilogy, where he delves into Celtic mythology and comes up with his own inspired creations from that cauldron of deities and beasts.

The final act of the drama is played out in the city of Tanelorn. Secrets of the Runestaff and of the rune-etched sword are revealed and the cosmic balance is seen in the sky. Throughout the final scenes, the beauties of Tanelorn are revealed in their entirety, and many answers are supplied which give a deeper understanding of the Eternal Champion mythos. At last Erekose finds peace, but at a high personal cost, and the other incarnations find that their quests have come to an end.

When the final curtain comes down, it is on a stage strewn with statues of the characters who have acted out this epic drama.

Also on stage for the duration of the play is a strong supporting cast. A special mention must be given to Jhary-a-Conel, who, in one guise or another, is always giving his support to whichever incarnation happens to be occupying centre stage. There is also a veritable plethora of heroines, deities, demons, elementals, sorcerers and villains. The leading ladies of the production are Rhalina, Yishana, Ermizhad and Yisselda.

Props include a multitude of stunning effects and spectacles to delight the visual senses — a sword which kills of its own volition, a tower which vanishes from one plane only to appear on another, a ship which sails over land and sea, a mirror which holds and traps the memories of those who look into it, a lake which gives out the voices of its drowned victims, and a castle built of dried blood.

Marvel at the battles between Law and Chaos; gasp as the cosmic balance swings first to one, then to the other; sit spellbound in your seat as the multiverse passes through the conjunction of a million spheres before your very eyes....

These are but a few of the delights that await you once you enter the lavish theatre of **The Eternal Champion**.

The Eternal Champion

A Bibliography

Erekose
- The Eternal Champion
- Phoenix in Obsidian
- Swords of Heaven, Flowers of Hell

Hawkmoon

History of the Runestaff
- The Jewel in the Skull
- The Mad God's Amulet
- The Runestaff

The Chronicles of Castle Brass
- Count Brass
- The Champion of Garathorm
- The Quest for Tanelorn

Corum

The Books of Corum
- The Knight of the Swords
- The Queen of the Swords
- The King of the Swords

The Chronicles of Prince Corum and the Silver Hand
- The Bull and the Spear
- The Oak and the Ram
- The Sword and the Stallion

Elric
- **Elric of Melniboné**
- **The Sailor on the Seas of Fate**
- **The Weird of the White Wolf**
- **The Vanishing Tower**
- **The Bane of the Black Sword**
- **Stormbringer**

The titles in the Elric series are not the original titles, but those for the series in chronological order first published in America. They are now published in this country by Granada books who also publish nearly all the Eternal Champion books, plus most other Michael Moorcock books available in paperback.

Forthcoming

Elric at the End of Time
(May 1985, Granada — First paperback edition; includes two Elric stories appearing for the first time in paperback, essays and reprints of the Sojan stories.
Elric Gaming Books
(October 1985, Granada)
Stormbringer
(June 1985, Granada — reissue)

David Hill

Music for the production is provided by **Deep Fix** — a delicate little chamber orchestra, lead by Desmond Reid. This bright ensemble captures every nuance of the evening admirably, each note echoing perfectly the mood on stage.

The whole production is stage managed and produced by Edward P Bradbury.

Theatre critic James Colvin, sometime writer of realistic fiction and opera singer extraordinaire, co-ordinated and arranged the whole event. Tragically, he did not live to see the opening night. At the dress rehersal, a large filing cabinet fell on him, crushing his chest. He never regained consciouness. An obituary by his lifelong friend and fellow critic William Barclay will appear in the next issue of **New Worlds**.

Soon to go on tour of the multiverse, this extravaganza will play at the following venues: Lywn-an-Esh, Munchien, Ilmiora, Shazar, Jharkor, Lormyr, Bugle, The Realms of Chaos, Lake Billy The Kid, with the last night at Ladbroke Grove.

What/who is The Eternal Champion? Perhaps this is partially answered by a quote from **Aspects of Fantasy**, written by Michael Moorcock in 1963:

"The hero ranges the land of his own psyche, encountering the various aspects of himself. When we read a good fantasy, we are being admitted into the subterranean worlds of our own souls."

IMAGINE™ magazine interviews....

Michael Moorcock

For readers of Sword & Sorcery stories, the name of Michael Moorcock is synonymous with all that is the best and most exciting in the genre. His character Elric is much loved by lovers of fiction and gamers of all kinds. In this exclusive interview, which took place in October at the Forbidden Planet Bookshop in London, IMAGINE magazine brings the man's career up to date.

IMAGINE magazine: *The project that you've done for this magazine revolves around the character Earl Aubec, a hero first written about in the story* ***The Master of Chaos*** *– originally entitled* ***Earl Aubec and the Golem****. Why was this hero chosen?*

Michael Moorcock: We're going back about twenty years to the days of the magazine **Science Fantasy**. At that time I thought about writing a series of novels and stories about Earl Aubec, and about the Young Kingdoms. When IMAGINE magazine asked for the game scenario, I thought it a good idea to use the Aubec material as it relates to Elric, and readers will be familiar with the lands on the map — they are the same ones which feature in the Elric stories.

I *In an article titled* ***Elric*** *reprinted in the book* ***Sojan*** *you wrote: "If Cele Goldsmith likes the next one, I'm planning the first of a series showing the development of the Earth from a rather unusual slant.... vaguely possible that Elric will appear in future stories." Can you enlarge on that?*

M The scenario is based on one of the stories, but Elric doesn't appear in it — though there are references to him. I did the scenario recently from one of the original ideas of that time, and I don't think, if I'd written the story back then, that when I got down to it I would have put Elric in. I shan't be writing any more stories of that period. I've always worked on the principle that if it doesn't excite me as the writer then it won't excite the reader. I've always adhered to that. Also, there's a distinct danger, if that danger hasn't already occurred, of repeating yourself.

I *The Elric story* ***The Last Enchantment****; could you tell us something about it?*

M It was written in 1962 and was going to be the last Elric story after **While The Gods Laugh**. Ted Carnell (*Editor of* ***Science Fantasy***) wanted more. I believe that he suggested that he, as agent, should submit the story in America. I forgot it until long after Ted died. Eventually, Les Flood, who had taken over Ted's agency, found the manuscript and sent it back. Ariel books were asking for a story at that time, so I sent them that one.

I *Where does it fit into the Elric saga?*

M I now see it as an episode between **While The Gods Laugh** and **Kings In Darkness**, I suppose.

I *The idea of Paradox features prominently in this story. Can you enlarge on this concept?*

M The paradoxical games played in the story are all in some way prefiguring later stories and also **The Dancers At The End Of Time**. Chaos enjoys paperboard paradox (in itself boring). While Law permits no paradox at all (also sterile). A world in balance is a world permitting both a degree of congruity plus a degree of paradox.

I *What is your personal knowledge of the games world, and why do you think it has become so popular?*

M (chuckles) I've played **Monopoly**.... and **Ludo** when I was younger. Unfortunately for me it's the time factor, but I know a lot of people who are actively involved. It's certainly very popular. If you look back to the 20s and 30s, the people then were enjoying the popular magazines, they contained the same types of fantasies but they weren't so formalized. It's also linked to the times we live in. Large numbers of people feel disenfranchised, and if people haven't got any effect, or feel that they haven't got any effect in the real world, they go into religion — or perhaps role-playing games. Both are substitutes for the person who feels that he has no effect on anything.

I *Will you get involved in role-playing games, or computer games?*

M Actively, no. I'll write the odd scenario, such as the outline I did for IMAGINE. It's a good way of adding to the Eternal Champion romances, plus I'll provide storylines for comics. Granada are doing an adventure role-playing game book based on Elric; there may even be a series. I don't know much about it, but it comes out next year, I think.

I *Why was the Elric set of Mythos associations withdrawn from the TSR* ***DEITIES & DEMIGODS*** *handbook?*

M I was asked by TSR if they could use the deities, etc, and quite cheerfully said yes, not realizing that Chaosium (*producers of the* ***Stormbringer*** *game*) was a rival firm. It was all settled amicably in the end, but it did mean that TSR had to drop that section from their book.

I *Can you tell us something about the concept behind the Eternal Champion, your inspiration and your favourite character?*

M I started work on it when I was sixteen, and originally the influences came from H Rider Haggard and A Merritt. The idea of being reborn and that of the Champion figure stemmed from those writers, and just grew and grew. Of all the incarnations, Elric is my favourite. Admittedly, some characters I've written about are more sophisticated, but my real love is for Elric.

I *Did you have a masterplan of 20+ books when you embarked on the series?*

M Not when I started as a lad, but fairly soon after, it started to take shape. The figures from mythology, the ones heard by John Daker, were changed for the characters which I was writing about in the paperback edition. I'm usually thinking about ten books ahead, so I can think about prefiguring stuff that I haven't really begun to write. I think ten books ahead (chuckles) because usually I don't want to write the book I'm actually writing. It's a way of tricking myself into thinking if I've got to write that imagined book I escape into writing the book I'm actually writing. I cut down on anxiety that way (laughs).

I *When did you first get involved in Sword & Sorcery; what did you read when you were young?*

M Hard to say. I was reading H Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs almost as soon as I could read. They were my father's books, and were readily available. I was six or seven, I suppose. After that others followed. I went through a miscellaneous selection, including Dickens, Shaw and school stories.

I *When you wrote the first story featuring Elric, everything was destroyed by the*

hero. Usually the hero sets out to find rather than destroy. Was it a concious effort to turn the genre on its head?

M (Chuckles) He's a sort of Byronic hero. I don't like heroes in the Conan mould who are described as good, but usually create mayhem all around. I suppose I project myself into the position. I'd be extremely upset with myself, and not be self-righteous about it.

***I** Is Elric you in your younger days?*

M Yes, I think so. A horribly exaggerated and romanticised version of an adolescent.

***I** Was he/is he a "writer's albatross"?*

M Not now. Ten to fifteen years ago I thought that he was, but time mellows.

***I** You must be pleased that the Elric books are at last being published in sequence in this country.*

M Yes I am. Granada are hoping to buy the rights to the first one, **Elric of Melniboné**, and then they'll have all six. In Germany they're published in one massive volume, and very good it is too.

***I** In your books, Law and Chaos is a central theme. Can you tell IMAGINE readers where the influences come from?*

M I enjoyed the books by Poul Anderson — **The Broken Sword** and **Three Hearts and Three Lions**. Basically it's a good metaphor for the human being; the two forces warring inside the individual. Half of us is attracted to the wild side — the romance of chaos, while the other half is saying that if you spend all your money, you won't have any left for your bus fare. I also used the ideas behind Zorastrianism. Again, that sort of dichotomy, the sort of ambiguity of light and dark and the different aspects of it seem to me to reflect the human condition. A lot also comes from the thoughts of Jung.

***I** Symbolism is prominent in your books. Perhaps we could look at some of the symbols you use. How do you see Tanelorn, that mythical city, in your books?*

M It's an ideal.... There's a lot of symbolic ideas; the Utopian world, lost dreams, dreams of perfection. That's what I write about. In **The Golden Barge**, I discuss how people completely mess things up in attempting to achieve and discover some sort of Utopia. There's a constant ambivalence around it and Tanelorn is, I suppose, a dream of perfection. Even in the recent books, **Byzantium Endures** and **Laughter of Carthage**, I'm writing about a kind of horribly debased ideal world which Pyat is talking about.

***I** What does the Runestaff featured in the Hawkmoon books symbolize?*

M I suppose it's a sort of perfect order. It's similar to the Holy Grail in a lot of its characteristics. It operates on several levels. At one it's a source of order, on another a source of disorder, in that human nature is inclined to make an awful lot of trouble just to get hold of it.

***I** What does the blind captain represent in **The Quest for Tanelorn**? Where does this idea come from?*

M Another image. In a way, it's how I see man. The blind steersman is, in a sense, how we all stumble through life. It's another poetic image with a number of resonances to it. The blind leading the blind is one of the resonances.

***I** Each of your heroes has a companion. What role does he play?*

M It's formalized mythology. In most folk stories there is a companion. His function for me is to take the piss out of the hero; bring him down to earth, see the whole picture and make the hero stop taking things so seriously. He's really the ironic counterpoint. In straight fiction you'd use the ironic counterpoint in stylistic terms; in visionary fiction, it's people or characters supplying different aspects of human nature who take over this role.

***I** Linked with the companion, why do the letters "J C" feature so prominently in the names of your characters?*

M Ted Carnell (John Carnell, the editor of **Science Fantasy**) picked the initials JC for James Colvin from his own initials *(James Colvin is a pseudonym used by Michael Moorcock).* I never thought about Jerry Cornelius having the same initials, it just happened. I then decided to make something of it and use it for several other characters. One thing led to another. But in the beginning it was coincidental. I believe that you never produce a theory until you've actually done it. It certainly wasn't planned from the beginning.

***I** In the Corum Trilogies there are several Celtic ideas, associations and myth references. Was this intentional?*

M I was in Cornwall at the time and it was a rainy holiday, so I decided to look at the Cornish language and the Celtic myths. The ideas came from there and the inspiration behind the books is Cornwall. Moidel's Mount is based on St Michael's Mount. As a kid I spent a lot of time in Devon and Cornwall with relatives like great aunts. Now I recall images of the places but I was so young I can't remember the places where I stayed. It's the landscape which I like so much and which I used as a background for the books.

***I** How do you set about drawing and planning the maps and stories and thinking out the names for people and places?*

M They come naturally. The map was the first thing I'd do; I've always enjoyed drawing the maps. Whilst drawing the maps I'd be thinking around the story. I don't start with a preconceived beginning, middle and ending. Images are the important part. The plot tends to come naturally as do the names whilst I'm writing. What I make sure of is that the images are coherent and that the whole thing coheres as a piece. The landscape, the creatures, the swords — the general inventions, that is, all have to be a part of the same and feel right. They have to resonate. They must all fit. Once I have the images I let the plot take care of itself as I write.

***I** How long did the Sword & Sorcery romances take to write? Were they written for the love of the theme or because you needed the money to fund **New Worlds** of which you were then editor?*

M Absolutely both. There's no line you could draw between them. I enjoy story telling. I'm fairly unique in the Science Fiction/ Fantasy circle where the short story is the supreme form. Most of the best writers are best as short stories; I'm best at novels, just by sheer luck. The Hawkmoon books were each done in three days. I never re-read them after I'd finished them. Straight off the typewriter and off to the publisher. When writing a new book with links back to

others, I would skip-read the previous books to check up on facts. Now I spend a little longer.

I Will you ever return to the Sword & Sorcery genre?

M Scenarios for comic books and role-play adventures satisfy the urge to return to **The Eternal Champion**. There is one last novel — the final Eternal Champion book. I've owed the novel to Granada for about four years and I'm planning to write it next year. It'll be based on the comic book **Swords of Heaven, Flowers of Hell** which Chaykin illustrated. I'll add more to that one, but essentially it'll be the same story.... I'm still writing fantasy, it's just that it's getting a bit more away from Sword & Sorcery.

I Have you ever had offers from other publishers who would like to base more books on your Sword & Sorcery characters but written by other authors?

M Yes. From time to time that happens, but I've turned it down so far. I've permitted them to be used in comics and games, but I've drawn the line at a story or novel by someone else. You can completely dissipate something by doing that, or by allowing it to go on and on; whether it's by you or someone else. (Chuckles) I've got my price. If someone offered me a million quid to take over Elric I'm sure I'd accept. But up to about a million quid I've still got my principles. (The chuckle turns to a laugh)

*I If we can turn to **The Warhound and the World's Pain**, how did that one come about?*

M The editor of Timescape books (American) wanted another book from me. I wanted to get away from straight Sword & Sorcery with imagined landscapes, so I wrote this one. There are another two in the pipeline, which follow on, so to speak. Not the same characters, but the same family — the Von Bek. The second one is set about one hundred and fifty years on from **The Warhound**. It's in the period of the French Revolution. The books are set around the change from, as it were, the Age of Religion into the Age of Science. I'm finishing off the second one now and the third one is partly drafted. They're called **The City in the Autumn Stars** and **Manfred; or The Gentleman Houri**.

I You enjoy working in threes, don't you?

M (Laughs) Yes I do. It comes from working in three day stints when I did a section a day on the romances.

I Do you read much fantasy?

M No. I read and like M John Harrison and the Fritz Leiber stories when new ones appear. It's very swiftly becoming the debased form of literature. The titles are becoming more and more ludicrous. (Laughing) I thought I'd gone as far as one could go there.

I Who are your favourite illustrators, not necessarily sci fi ones?

M Mervyn Peake's an obvious one. Heath and Charles Robinson, Dulac and all of the so-called Golden Age artists. Modern day ones are those I work with, especially Chaykin and Cawthorn. I enjoy the landscapes Rodney Matthews has done and the latest Elric covers. He's got a new book coming out soon and I'm doing the introduction for it.

*I What happened to two titles which I've seen in catalogues: one by John Clute and the other your book **Heroic Dreams**?*

M John Clute was going to write **The Cruel World and its Pierrot**, which was a critical look at my books. But he never wrote it. My book is actually written but the publishing company went bankrupt. It's very critical of an awful lot of books which are popular. Tolkien doesn't come out too well. As they say, it knocks the product. **Elric at the End of Time**, the short story, which showed him in a comic light — several American publishers turned that down initially because it knocked the product.

I Could you tell us about your writing routine?

M It's a strict nine-to-five day. I tend to be very disciplined when I'm writing a novel. I tend not to drink much and not do anything except work. I'm with it the whole time. At one time I almost worked through the year. This year I took some time off to do some travelling. I keep a general notebook, but not so much as I used to.

I How do you view your latest work?

M What I'm involved in at present is going towards what I term realistic fiction rather than fantasy. Then again what is realistic fiction? A lot of it is still visionary if you look closely at it.

I Which books would you like to be remembered for?

M The current ones — **Byzantium Endures** and **Laughter of Carthage**. Only because they're the most serious type of thing I've ever done. There are still two more to be written in the series so it could conceivably be those.

*I I'd like to move on to the musical side of your life. In **Entropy Tango** there were several poems. Were these intended for song lyrics?*

M Yes. Unfortunately the whole thing fell through and it got shelved. We did all the demos for it and also for **Gloriana**, but they never materialised. Dave Brock of Hawkwind has just asked me if I'm prepared to work on a new LP. I told him yes, but that this time it's got to go all the way through. I don't know how many scenarios I've done for Hawkwind, and songs that fit, but they've never found their way onto record. I don't know what we'll be doing, but it'll probably be sword and sorcery oriented. Over the years I've had a bad deal on the music side. I signed a stupid and doubtful music contract and I haven't received a penny in royalties for the work I've done for Blue Oyster Cult.

I Are there any ambitions left to be fulfilled?

M **Gloriana** was the best thing we did musically. I'd like to see that get into production. Originally it was done as a potential music/speech dramatization, but the BBC music department said that it didn't fit into their department and the drama department said it didn't fit into theirs. That was that. I'd also like to see an Elric film, but the chances are pretty thin. Producers have found that it's cheaper to rip off ideas than it is to pay for them!

I Will the audience who have enjoyed your Sword & Sorcery, Jerry Cornelius, and the End of Time books move with you as you tread the new ground of realistic fiction?

M I believe that the public doesn't go for categories. It's publishers and booksellers who go for those. Someone once said about me that I'm a commodity on my name as far as publishers are concerned. As far as readers are concerned, I'm very pleased to find youngsters reading my books. With luck, if they enjoy Byzantium, for example, it may open up a new avenue of fiction that previously they'd thought they wouldn't like. I always get a large number of youngsters and teenagers when I do signing sessions at Forbidden Planet, and that's something which I find very rewarding.

I To end on a lighter note you've 'died' twice, yet in an article in 1963 you said: 'I don't want to die. I hope I shan't. Maybe I'll be the exception that proves the rule.'

M (Laughing) I enjoy life a lot, and it always strikes me as extremely unfair that you have to die.

This was the first time that I'd met Michael Moorcock and I hope that it won't be the last. Even though he had a raging dose of 'flu nothing was too much trouble for him. He is a gentleman in the true sense of the word, completely unassuming and possessing a great sense of humour. Ones heroes are often found to have feet of clay. Not Michael Moorcock. Genuine, sincere and a man of high literary and personal principles.

My thanks also to Forbidden Planet bookshop for their warmth and hospitality in allowing me to carry out the interview on their premises.

David Hill (October 1984)

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"....Even the Melniboneans had heard the tales of Lormyr's hero of ancient times, Aubec of Malador, who was said to have carved new lands from the stuff of Chaos that had once existed at the World's Edge...."

The Sleeping Sorceress - Michael Moorcock

EARL AUBEC AND THE IRON GALLEON

by Michael Moorcock and Michael Brunton

This is an AD&D® adventure designed to be played by a Dungeon Master (DM) plus one player with the single provided character. The central character is one of Michael Moorcock's creations, Earl Aubec of Malador, who shares the same world background as Elric of Melniboné. Aubec is a hero of the same world from an earlier age.

Both the DM and player will benefit from reading **The World of the Young Kingdoms** before play begins. It lays out — in brief detail — the general background of Aubec's world, and part of his personal history. If you intend playing Earl Aubec you should read no further than the next section. The rest of the information is for the Dungeon Master alone.

The World of the Young Kingdoms

"For ten thousand years did the Bright Empire of Melniboné flourish. Ten thousand years before history was recorded - or ten thousand years after history had ceased to be chronicled, reckon it how you will. Only Melniboné ruled the earth for a hundred centuries...."

The Chronicle of the Black Sword

So begins the last book of Elric's adventures, which leads to the destruction of the world of Melniboné and the Young Kingdoms. The same world — several centuries earlier in its history — is the setting for the adventures of Earl Aubec of Malador.

Aubec's world is similar in many respects to that of Elric. Yet in Aubec's time the Bright Empire of Melniboné is still strong. Gadric XI, son of Terhali, the Green Empress, sits on the Dragon Throne, a close consort of the Dukes of Hell. Disdainful of the human affairs of the Young Kingdoms that have grown up like weeds around them, the near-human Melnibonéans still exert a terrible influence upon the world. The power of the Dragon Princes of Imrryr is felt everywhere, through their golden battle barges and fearsome flame-spittled dragons. The sorcerous Melnibonéans also have a long association with the Lords of Chaos and Entropy, powerful demonic beings who seek to bring the world under their total domination and release Chaos Unbound. All this serves to make the humans of the Young Kingdoms fearful — and respectful in their fear — of Melnibonéans and their works.

Aubec is the Champion of Lormyr, one of the southern Young Kingdoms. As Champion he was also Queen Eloarde's Consort and the father of her child, Prince Haminak. The boy is the one thing in all the world that Aubec cares about.

Nearly everything has changed since the revolt of Eloarde's half-brother, Aradard. Aubec is now an exile from Lormyr, pursued by Aradard's assassins wherever he journeys. After witnessing the brutal murder of Eloarde by Aradard, and then smuggling Haminak to apparent safety, Aubec has found himself deprived of his lands, his Queen and (indirectly) his son.

Aubec lives only for vengeance. He is willing to rob and murder in order to destroy Aradard and his minions, and recover his lost son. He wanders the world, his only companions a small cat and his trusty broadsword, selling his military skills to the highest bidder until he can raise an army and return to Lormyr. And, at times, he meets Myshella of Kaneloon, a sorceress determined to involve him in the affairs of Fate, affairs of an altogether more weighty nature.

At the point when this adventure starts, Aubec has already had some experience of sorcery, the powers of Chaos and the machinations of Fate and Law. As told in **The Master of Chaos**, Aubec assaulted Castle Kaneloon under the direct orders of Queen Eloarde, hoping to make it part of the kingdom of Lormyr. At Kaneloon he fought and defeated creatures from his own imagination. In rising above the darkness of his own mind Aubec won the right to go beyond the world's boundary and carve new lands from the Chaos-stuff that existed beyond. Here too, he first encounters Myshella, the Dark Lady, and refuses the 'rights' that she offers him....

Dungeon Master's Notes

Background

Aubec and the Iron Galleon concerns the rescue of a powerful artifact, the Horn of Fate, from the clutches of a Melnibonéan outcast, Dyvim Ka'aand. It has fallen into his hands by accident — although nothing to do with Fate is accidental — and, ignorant of its power and purpose, he has unwittingly brought it into the world of the Young Kingdoms.

The Horn of Fate has only one purpose in the world of the Young Kingdoms, it heralds the end of the all things and the beginning of a new world free from sorcery. Prince Elric is to blow the Horn three times at the End of the World, and to have it sounded before then would only lead to the destruction of the Earth and its incorporation into the realm of the Chaos Lords.

Dyvim Ka'aand is the captain of the Iron Galleon, a remarkable ship with the power to sail the Seas between the Worlds. While on another plane, he rescued a shipwrecked reaver, Ulrek One-Ear, an uncharacteristically quixotic gesture. When Ulrek proved to be boring a conversationalist Dyvim killed him as a diversion during dinner one evening.

Ulrek's only possessions — a good broadsword and a drinking horn — were added to the Iron Galleon's collection of trinkets, although Dyvim realised that the horn had a quality that could not have come from same plane as Ulrek. Before the reaver died, he confessed to having taken the horn during a raid on the tower of a sea-mage. Momentarily intrigued, Dyvim resolved to investigate the horn and then he returned to his other — more amusing — pursuits.

The Iron Galleon sailed on, and eventually passed into the world of the Young Kingdoms, bringing the Horn of Fate with it. While it is within the Young Kingdoms, the Horn represents a tremendous danger. Its sounding is the signal for the end of the world, yet if Fate is not to be thwarted only Elric can blow the Horn, centuries in Aubec's future.

The Lords of Law have a vested interest in seeing that the Horn is blown at the proper time. Only then have they any hope of freeing the Young Kingdoms from the influence of Chaos. Until the Horn is blown — at the appointed time — they are too weak on this plane to take direct action. They have therefore told their chief servant, Myshella of Kaneloon, of the Horn of Fate and the need to get it away from this world at this time. Myshella's thoughts have turned to Aubec, and the part he might play in recovering the Horn of Fate....

A Note on Alignment

"Law" and "Chaos" are terms familiar to all AD&D players — and within the game these are based upon the ideas in Michael Moorcock's books. However, the game terms "Lawful" and "Chaotic" do not mean precisely the same things in Aubec's world as they would elsewhere — the classifications of "Good" and "Evil" have no real relevance.

For example, the Melnibonéans have a highly stratified slave-based society where unspeakable cruelties are the norm. Yet they also have the finest art, culture and sensibilities to be found in the Young Kingdoms. Despite their apparently "Lawful Evil" alignment, the Melnibonéans are allied with the Lords of Chaos.

The Lords of Chaos (also referred to as the Lords of Entropy and the Dukes of Hell) and the Lords of Law are engaged in an eternal struggle to control the "Multiverse". These powerful beings exist — to a greater or lesser degree — in all the planes of existence, although as individuals they may be banished from particular planes so effectively as to be thought of as "dead". The Lords of Law are in this position upon Aubec's plane, and the rather fickle Lords of Chaos hold sway directly and through their agents such as the Melnibonéans.

Ultimately it is clear from Moorcock's books that both Chaos and Law are sterile, one through unending change without invention, the other through unending order without change. The difference between the two is that Law recognises the power of the Cosmic Balance — Fate — while Chaos seeks to overthrow that power.

Men openly pledge themselves to one cause or another. The greedy, uncaring and power-hungry usually ally with Chaos, while those of a "nobler" persuasion choose Law. Neither side offers mercy to its enemies.

Money

The coinage of the Young Kingdoms is broadly similar to that given in the AD&D rules. Each nation mints its own coinage, but all are freely interchangeable. One other coin of note exists, the Melnibonéan Wheel. Said to represent the Wheel of Chaos, these coins are carved (rather than minted) from pure gold. These coins are extremely rare, and consequently extremely valuable (worth at least 250gp). Most humans are reluctant to handle 'tainted' Melnibonéan money, and Wheels in particular.

Luck Points

Luck points are given to characters to reflect abilities beyond the normal scope of the rules. At the start of play the DM should assign 6-10 Luck points to Aubec, depending upon the competence of the player. The player should be told that his character has some Luck points to spend — but not how many — and be told what they can be used to influence. He or she should also be told that NPcs may have been allocated Luck points as well. The DM determines how NPcs spend their Luck points, depending upon the player character's actions.

In this adventure spending 1 Luck point allows:

1. a successful ability check; or
2. an extra attack in a melee round; or
3. ignoring a minor wound (1-8 points of damage inflicted in one blow can be ignored).

Spending 2 Luck points allows:

1. a 'death blow' to be attempted. If a 20 or more (including any modifiers) is rolled on the 'to hit' die, an opponent has been struck dead with one blow. If the die roll is less, the attack is resolved normally; or
2. recovery of hit points equal to a **cure serious wounds** spell — the character 'pulls himself together'; or
3. a required Saving Throw to be reduced to 2 or better.

Ability Checks

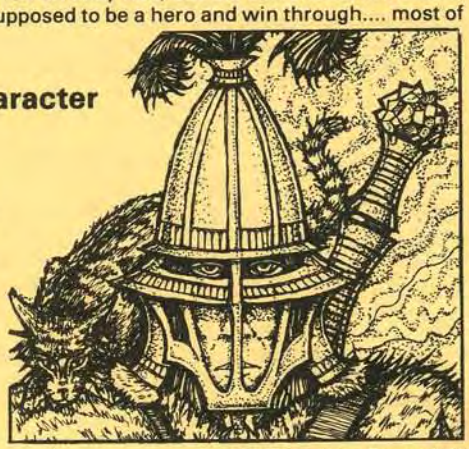
At certain points in the adventure Aubec will be required to make an ability check. This requires a roll of less than the relevant ability on 1d20.

One-on-One Play

In a one player module it is always possible to 'kill off' the one and only character with ease. The DM must resist the temptation to see the adventure as a personal confrontation, and his or her duty in that confrontation as 'getting' the player. This doesn't mean that the player character should be given an easy ride, but the DM should remember that the character is supposed to be a hero and win through.... most of the time.

The Player Character

EARL AUBEC OF MALADOR: AC -1; MV 9"; Fighter 12; hp 99; #AT 3/2; D by weapon; AL LN; Size M; THACO 5 (7); S 18/76 (+2/+4), I 13, W 9, C 17, D 16 (+1/-2), Ch 15 (+15%); plate armour (AC1); iron **two-handed sword +3** (nsa).



A Second Player: Jhary-a-Conel

If Jhary is used as a character (when there are two players) he should be allocated 3-5 Luck points and Aubec only given 5-8 Luck points. Those NPCs who have been allocated Luck points may be allocated one extra point at the DM's discretion.

Jhary-a-Conel: AC 4; MV 12"; Fighter 7; hp 40; #AT 3/2; D by weapon; AL N(G); Size M; THACO 14; S 16 (-/+1), I 17, W 15, C 14, D 18 (+3/-4), Ch 16; Jhary normally uses a longsword, but can any weapon at a pinch.
Jhary-a-Conel may also be used an NPC, encountered first in the Menagerie and Cargo Hold aboard the Iron Galleon (encounter area 7).

In this case he will not have any equipment, but will still have his cat. Jhary will aid Aubec in any fashion if he is released. The DM should reduce the chance of any of the other NPCs agreeing to aid Aubec if Jhary-a-Conel is used — he has, after all, been provided with an ally.

The ubiquitous self-proclaimed 'Companion-to-Champions' is a sophisticated, worldy-wise dandy who tolerates the intransigence of heroes with patience and skill. He is able to remember many incidents from his other incarnations, but whether this helps or hinders him is open to doubt. Jhary-a-Conel has some familiarity with magic, and can use magic items and scrolls as though a magic user.

Cats

Both Aubec and Jhary-a-Conel have cats as travelling companions. Aubec's cat is not a familiar, but it is sensitive to danger. The DM should make a point of mentioning (subtly) what the cat's reaction is to the various characters and situations in this module. Jhary's winged cat is unusual and it should be treated as a magic user's familiar.

Aubec's Cat: AC 6; MV 6"; HD 5 hit points; #AT 2; D 1-2/1; SA rear claws for 1-2; SD surprised on 1 only; MR Std; Int Animal; AL N; Size S; THACO 20; domestic cat — MM2.
Jhary's Cat, Whiskers: AC 6; MV 6"/18"; HD 1; hp 6; #AT 3; D 1-2/1-2/1-2; SA rear claws for 1-2/1-2; SD surprised on 1 only; MR Std; Int Animal; AL N; Size S; THACO 20; small, black and white winged cat, cf wild cat — MM2.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The DM should read out the following at the start of play:

The port of Cadsandria has some advantages, but news from Lormyr isn't one of them. Even though it is only a day or two's ride away, news — even gossip — is scarce. As the oldest enemy of Lormyr, you would think that the people of Argimiliar would have something to say about their foe. Warrior's work is scarce, too, as you reflect upon the few coins that remain in your pouch.

At least the tavern food and drink are passable, more than passable. The cat appreciates the good meat that the landlord has put before you. You listen to the sounds of laughter from a table across the room, and take a long pull at your wine cup.

Then the tavern becomes silent, and your hand goes towards the hilt of your sword. The cat leaps onto the table — and then purrs. From the shadows comes a woman's voice, 'Greetings, My Lord of Malador. I have searched long and hard for you.' Myshella, the Sorceress of Kaneloon steps forward and sits at your table.

'My Lord, I would not have come were it not a matter of the gravest urgency. My masters need a warrior of great skill; quickly.

'Sailing the seas of this world is a ship of sorcerous origin, a vessel made of iron. It sails not only the seas of the Young Kingdoms, but the waters of other worlds as well. On one such the captain of this Iron Galleon rescued a sailor — for what reasons I do not know.'

She picks up a wine cup and takes a sip, and offers the cat a scrap from the edge of your platter. It purrs quietly.

'That in itself is unimportant. What the man was carrying is infinitely more so, a treasure of incomparable power in this world. A simple horn, apparently, yet capable of bringing about the ruin of everything if it were to be sounded at this time by any other than the one appointed to do so. That event lies centuries in the future with Elric, ahh, sad Elric. I shall not see him do it, but it can be only Elric if Fate is to be obeyed.

'Aubec, you must hunt the Iron Galleon and take the Horn of Fate from its captain, then bring it to me at Kaneloon, whence I can send it to safety, for its own sake and that of this world.

'There is a ship of Tarkesh at the docks. Hire it, and sail towards the port of Dhakos in Jharkor on the morning tide. This money will be more than enough for the Tarkeshite galley. Within five days you will meet the Iron Galleon. We must hope that nobody becomes curious about the tune that the Horn plays in that time!

Myshella stands and drops a purse on the table. Her hand lingers on the cat's head. Tavern sounds suddenly break in on your thoughts.

The sorceress is gone.

If Aubec questions any of the people in the tavern, they did not see Myshella at all. They will regard him with increasing suspicion if he continues to question them.

In the purse left by Myshella are 40gp, 10gp worth of mixed silver and copper coins, five rubies worth 500gp each, and four Melnibonéan Wheels (worth 1000gp in total). After paying for his stay at the tavern (a bill of 15gp), Aubec should make his way to the dockside and the Tarkeshite ship.

If Aubec decides not to obey Myshella's instructions and hire the Tarkeshite ship, nothing will happen for two days. On the evening of the third day Aubec will be attacked by a group of Aradard's men as he leaves a tavern.

(Up to) 6 of Aradard's hirelings: AC 3; MV 9"; Fighter 6; hp 38 each; #AT 1; D by weapon; Int Ave; AL NE; Size M; xp 529 each; THACO 16; wearing platemail and armed with longswords and/or battle axes.

The DM should hint to the player that Aubec's whereabouts have been discovered, and that he can expect further 'visits' from Aradard's men.

There should be a similar attack by another group on the following morning. Aubec should realise that escape by sea is the only valid method of avoiding further confrontations with Aradard's hired killers.

The Tarkeshite Galley

The Barnava Lass is a trading galley from the port of Barnava in Tarkesh. The ship is some 80' long, with an 18' beam, somewhat small by Tarkeshite standards, but strongly built. At present the Barnava Lass is the only sea-going vessel anchored in the harbour at Cadsandria. Her last cargo has been unloaded, but the ship's master, Captain Ibraim, has not yet found another load. Aubec will find Captain Ibraim drinking in a cheap dockside tavern with his steersman, Valuis, and his chief oarsman, Tergas. Ibraim will not be keen on leaving harbour so soon after a voyage, especially as he and his crew have just been paid for their last cargo.

Ibraim will start by asking for 1500gp for the hire of his ship and his crew. If Aubec gives his destination as Dhakos all will be well, but if the Iron Galleon is mentioned Ibraim will raise his price to 2000gp. If Aubec haggles Ibraim will accept 1000gp, as he knows that an empty ship will

make a fast passage to Dhakos — a week at most — and that he will be able to pick up another cargo there as easily as anywhere else.

Ibraim will not accept the Melnibonéan coins as payment — and will not even touch them. He will be more than happy to take two — or more — of the rubies as payment. Once they see the gems Valuis and Tergas will also take a strong interest in the contents of Aubec's money pouch. Ibraim will then send his two subordinates to round up the rest of the crew from the other dockside taverns and brothels. At dawn the Barnava Lass will weigh anchor and head northwest towards Dhakos and the Iron Galleon.

The crew of the Barnava Lass:

Ibraim, Valuis, Tergas: AC 5; MV 12"; Fighter 5; hp 32, 30, 25; #AT 1; D by weapon; Str 16 (-/+1), Int Ave, Dex 15; AL N; Size M; xp 342, 330, 300; THACO 16; all wear studded leather armour and carry shortswords.
25 sailors: AC 7; MV 12"; Fighter 2; hp 12 each; #AT 1; D by weapon; Int Ave; AL N; Size M; xp 71 each; THACO 20; armed with shortswords, hand axes and spears.

The Voyage

The DM should use at least one of the first two encounters given below, and must use the third encounter, **The Collision in the Fog**. The DM should read the relevant boxed section to the player at the start of the encounter, altering the names of the ship and captain if necessary.

These encounters happen on the first three days of the voyage from Cadsandria to Dhakos or Aflitain. The winds on these days are light, and by the evening of the third day Aubec's ship will only have reached the northern point of Melniboné.

1. The Wind Demon

> The morning dawns clear, as one of the sailors brings you a cup of mulled wine for breakfast. Suddenly, one of the lookouts gives a horrified cry, and staggers back from his post. A misty cloud rolls across the deck, gradually forming into some sort of creature. It slides towards another sailor, who strikes vainly with his sword, and then slumps to the deck, terribly wounded.

The creature is an ildriss, a type of grue elemental. It has attacked the ship as an act of pure devilment. Only Aubec possesses a weapon which can hit the creature, but it will not attack him until it has no other obvious targets, preferring to terrorise the crew first.

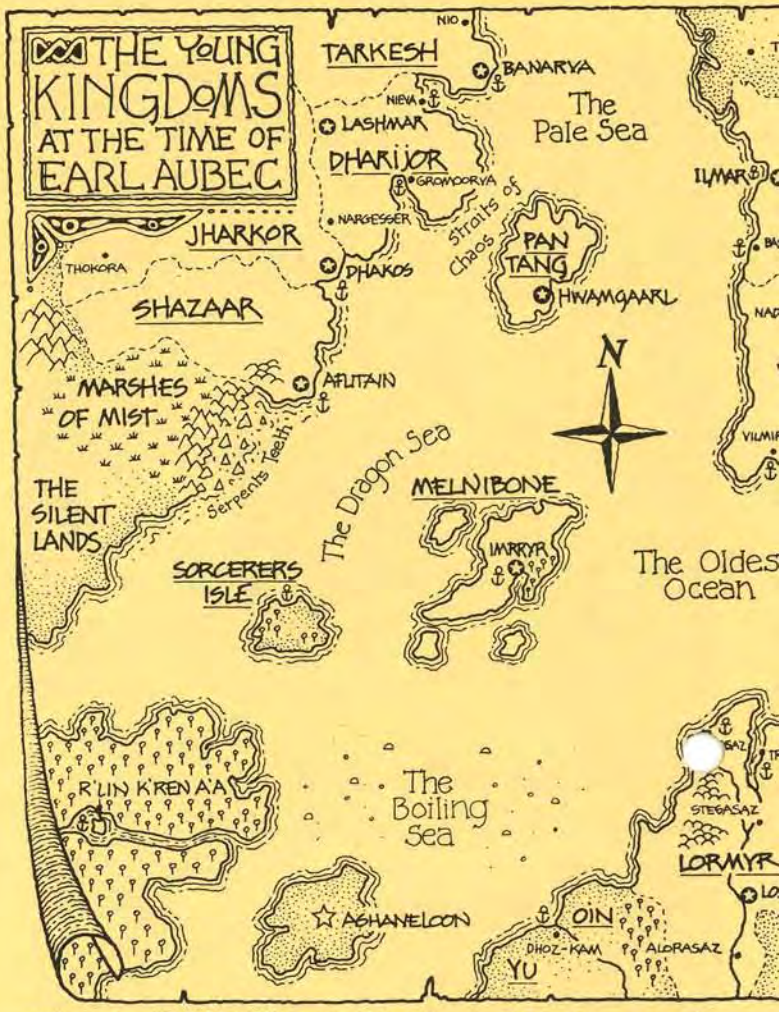
1 ildriss: AC 2; MV 3" as rolling fog, otherwise 24"; HD 4; hp 32; #AT 1; D 3-12; SA 4 in 6 chance of surprise, always attacks first; SD +2 or better weapons to hit, immune to air based attacks; MR Standard; Int Low; AL NE; Size M; xp 405; THACO 15; MM2 — Grue, air.

2. The Pirate Ship

> Off the port beam a galley appears out of the haze. It flies no colours, but its oars move with purposeful strokes on a course that will bring it near to your ship. Captain Ibraim moves to stand by your side, muttering over the looks of the approaching vessel. He gives orders to alter course to starboard.
>
> Before the sailors have a chance to obey a hail of arrows from the other ship strikes the Barnava Lass. It is a pirate ship. Grappling irons are flung across the now narrow gap to draw the vessels together.

The vessel is much more than a simple pirate ship. This is a Pan Tang slave raider looking for fresh victims. The Pan Tang ship is an open decked galley, some 90' long with a 20' beam. It has a small deck house, and a set of storage lockers down the centre line. The Pan Tangians will attempt to take their opponents prisoner — they are to be taken as slaves, facing a miserable future working to death on Pan Tang. The crew of Aubec's ship will fight bravely — even fanatically — in their own defence, as they are fully aware that slow death will be their only reward if they are captured.

The Pan Tang Sorceror-Captain: AC 8; MV 12"; Magic User 5; hp 13; #AT 1; D 1-4; SA Spells; **Magic Missile, Protection from Good, Push, Shield, Sleep, Mirror Image, Scare, Monster Summoning I**; Int High; AL CE; Size M; xp 425; THACO 20.



50 pirates: AC 8; MV 12"; Fighter 2; hp 10 each; #AT 1; D by weapon; Int Ave; AL CE; Size M; xp 65 each; THACO 20; armed with clubs, short-swords, axes and nets (a hit entangles the victim, making it impossible to attack or defend. A successful Strength check allows escape).

If captured, Aubec will be bound and left in the cable tier (at the bow of the galley) of the Pan Tang ship. His cat will follow him aboard — no-one will notice — while the Barnava Lass is fired and sunk. The following evening, a fog will descend, making sailing dangerous. The Pan Tangians will drag Aubec on deck to mock him. The course of play should follow that described below, with the Pan Tang slaver ship being run down by the Iron Galleon (Fate is not to be denied). Aubec may break his bonds by making a successful Strength ability check.

3. The Collision in the Fog

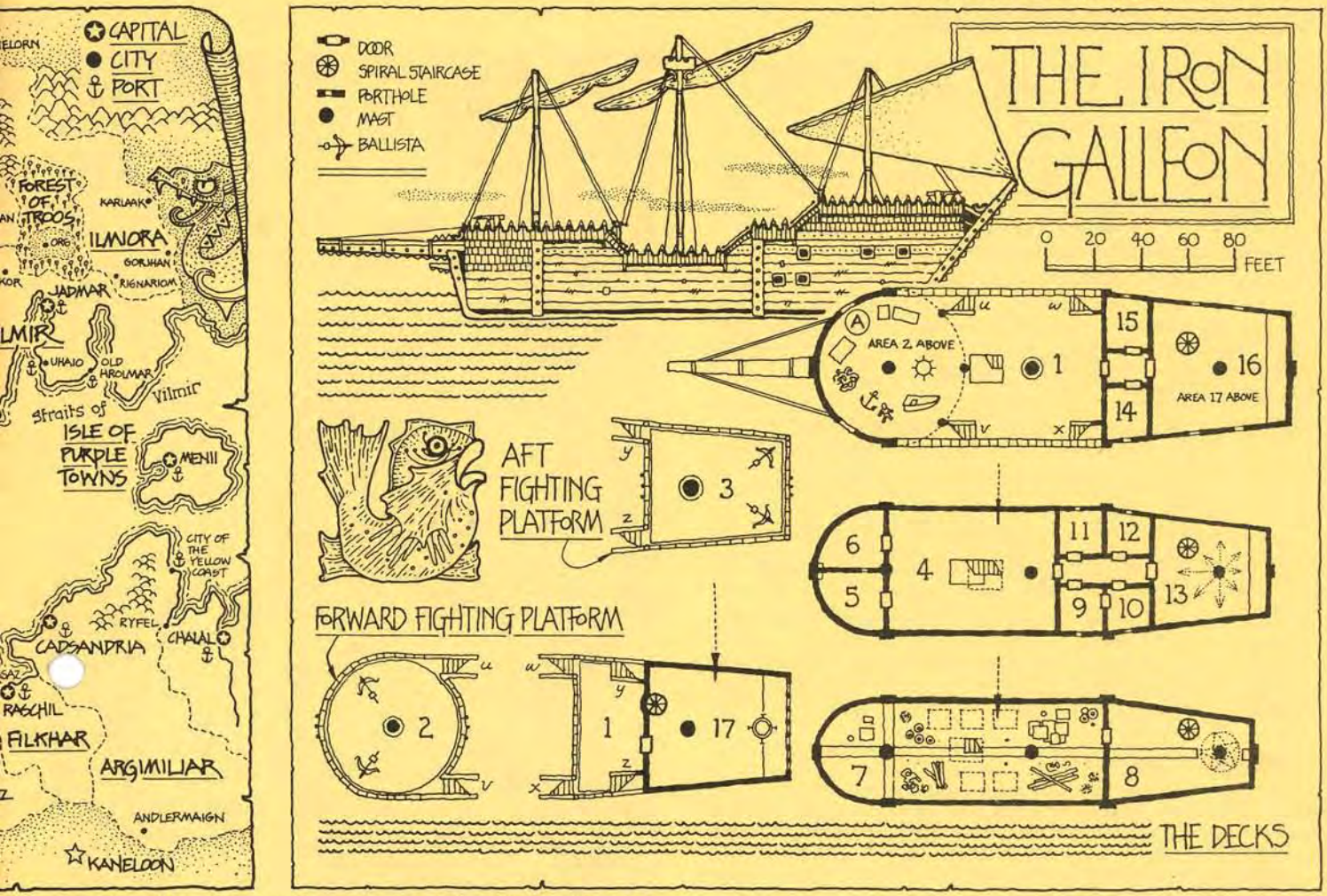
> Evening is falling, and with it the fog is gathering. Progress over the last three days has been slow, and looks like becoming even slower. In the bows of the boat stands a leadsman, calling the depth of the water. Before the mist thickened one of the lookouts saw the coast of Melniboné, and the waters around that island are full of treacherous shoals. Ibraim and Tergas join you at the rail, and a wine cup is held out towards you.
>
> Suddenly, a tall wall of metal appears, smashing through the side of the Barnava Lass, and you are hurled into the churning water.

The Iron Galleon has run the Barnava Lass down. Though it moves quite slowly, it is so massive that it automatically destroys the Tarkeshite vessel. If Aubec makes a successful Strength check he will be able to tread water. His cat will swim towards him and climb onto the top of his head. A subsequent successful dexterity check allows Aubec to grab the anchor chain of the Iron Galleon as it passes, and climb up it to 'safety'.

Aboard the Iron Galleon

1. Main Deck

If Aubec is successful in climbing up the anchor chain (the DM may care to remind the player that this feat will be successful if a a Luck point is



spent) he will board the Iron Galleon at the point marked A. The anchor itself is trailing in the water by the starboard side of the Iron Galleon. Aubec is the only survivor, and the cries of drowning sailors from the Barnava Lass will gradually be left behind as the metal ship sails on, its crew apparently heedless of the destruction they have wrought.

Shrouded in a never-changing fog that moves with it, the Iron Galleon has suffered from its constant immersion in salt water and other, more corrosive, seas. The air around the Iron Galleon is quite still, although the ship is moving at a rate of several knots. Overhead, the remains of the woven steel sails billow and crack as though in a strong wind, and the chain rigging apparently creaks with strain.

The entire ship has a look of neglect about it, rust streaks are clearly evident on all the ship's 'timbers'. The decks are speckled with bird lime and similar substances that could not have come from birds. Condensation drips from every surface, and any unprotected item will become damp in 1 turn — bowstrings and the like will become useless.

The raised and central sections of the main deck are empty and the forward hatchway is battened down. The doors into the after section of the Iron Galleon are rusty, but can be opened without difficulty. Faint sounds of life can be heard behind the doors.

The space beneath the forward fighting platform is cluttered with a variety of objects — a windlass, anchor and storage lockers and, beneath a canvas cover, a small wooden sailing boat. All are encrusted with salt. The windlass, the port anchor and its chain, and the (empty) storage lockers have rusted solid. Trapped beneath the anchor is what appears to be a suit of rusty, close-fitting armour. This is actually one of the Iron Sailors (see encounter area 4), now 'dead' because of his exposure to damp and salt.

When Aubec enters the central deck section he will be attacked by five of the stirges who have taken up residence in the rigging.

5 (of 20) Stirges: AC 8; MV 3"/18"; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; #AT 1; D 1-3; SA Blood drain (1-4), disease (cf giant rats — MM); Int Animal; AL N; Size S; xp 46 each; THACO 15; MM; these particular stirges have also adapted to a diet of carrion, hence the chance of causing disease.

The rigging itself is made of thin chains, and is incapable of supporting the weight of a man.

2. Forward & 3. Aft Fighting Platforms

These open deck areas are in a similar state to the main deck. The two ballistae — large javelin-firing crossbows — on each platform are rusted beyond use, but the six steel javelins (D 1-6) stored by each ballista are still usable as crude spears. Anyone climbing up to either platform will be attacked by the 2-5 of the stirges in the rigging (see above). If Aubec has already been attacked, the stirges may not (70%) attack at all.

4. Sailors' Mess

Below decks is where the real 'life' of the Iron Galleon is carried on. The sailors' mess is, apparently, like any other. It is gloomily lit by torches that gutter at various points around the chamber, casting constantly flickering shadows. Three-decker bunks fill most of the space, sufficient in number for a crew of one hundred or so, but the forward stacks have been long abandoned and are now the nests of rats.

The aft section of the cabin is still inhabited. The sailors who live here appear to wear suits of closely fitting platemail, even down to having masks, elaborately worked to represent the faces beneath. Only their eyes — which are black eye-shaped holes — and their stiff, awkward movements betray the fact that these are not men, but constructs built entirely of iron: the Iron Sailors, the crew that Mabelode the Faceless placed aboard to keep Dyvim Ka'aand company in his endless voyages.

Originally there were ninety Iron Sailors, but neglect, rust and the corrosive effects of years at sea have reduced this number to its present level. They exist in a strange parody of human sailors, spending their time cleaning the section of their mess that is still in use, polishing equipment (and themselves), 'sleeping' and looking after the needs of the living occupants in the aft section (see NPCs).

The Iron Sailors are unintelligent, and will ignore things that do not fall within the scope of whatever instructions they have been given. Unless attacked they will ignore Aubec, assuming him to be one of themselves because of his plate armour.

27 Iron Sailors: AC 2; MV 6"; HD 30 hp each; #AT 2; D 1-6/1-6; SA attacks as 6 HD monster, never gains initiative, instability (see below); SD half damage from non-magical weapons and magical blunt weaponry; Int Low; AL N; Size M; xp 590 each; THACO 13; special monster — cf golems (MM).

Once an Iron Sailor has been damaged, there is a chance that it will become unstable. Each round the DM should roll a d20, and if the result is greater than the Iron Sailor's remaining number of hit points it will revert to the Chaos-stuff from which it was made. All within 10' (including other Iron Sailors) must save vs spells or suffer the effects of a **confusion** spell for 1-4 rounds as the warping effect of the Chaotic material makes itself felt.

5. Cable locker & 6. Store

Both of these storage compartments have been unused for many years. In the cable locker the cables and chains stored there slipped and buried two Iron Sailors some years ago. One disolved into Chaos-stuff, incidentally warping some rats into the rust rats that now infest this forward section. The other Iron Sailor still lies where he fell, badly corroded and half-eaten by the rust rats.

The rust rats will attack anything that enters either of the rooms, as they have eaten a hole in the bulkhead between them. The entire contents of the Store — mostly ropes and repair tackle — are entirely useless after years of rat occupation.

18 rust rats: AC 4; MV 12"; HD 1; hp 2 each; #AT 1; D 1-4; SA rust metal (see below); Int Animal; AL N; Size S; xp 16 each; THACO 19; special monster — cf rust monster (MM).

The touch of a rust rat does not automatically corrode a metal item. It is entitled to a saving throw vs acid, failure indicating that it will be corroded in 1-3 rounds unless washed clean. Rust rats have a warped metabolism, capable of existing only on iron oxides — even those found in blood are sufficient to enable them to survive.

7. Menagerie & Cargo Hold

The denizens of Dyvim Ka'and menagerie have suffered from a recent loss of interest on the part of their keeper, and the five cages that hang from the ceiling contain only bodies, some of which have been attacked by rust rats (see above). Most of the corpses were once human beings, except for one who resembled a gigantic armoured lizard. All had been mutilated before death.

The DM might wish to have an NPC Jhary-a-Conel as the only living inhabitant of the menagerie — Dyvim Ka'aand has had no opportunity to devise a suitable 'entertainment' involving him.

The other contents of the hold are very mixed, flotsam and jetsam that the Iron Galleon has encountered druing its voyage. Arranged in a disorderly fashion are lengths of ship's timbers; oil barrels (for the lamps); mold-covered grain sacks; chests full of tea, raw cotton, white marble, pottery, and black powder (which is so damp as to be useless); wine amphorae; five life preservers marked **HMS Graf Spee**; and perched on top of one heap is a what appears to be a giant, misshapen arrow — a Phoenix AIM 54A air-to-air missile, which is armed and ready for firing. Should anyone tamper with this last item it will explode, doing 10-100 points of damage to all within 60'.

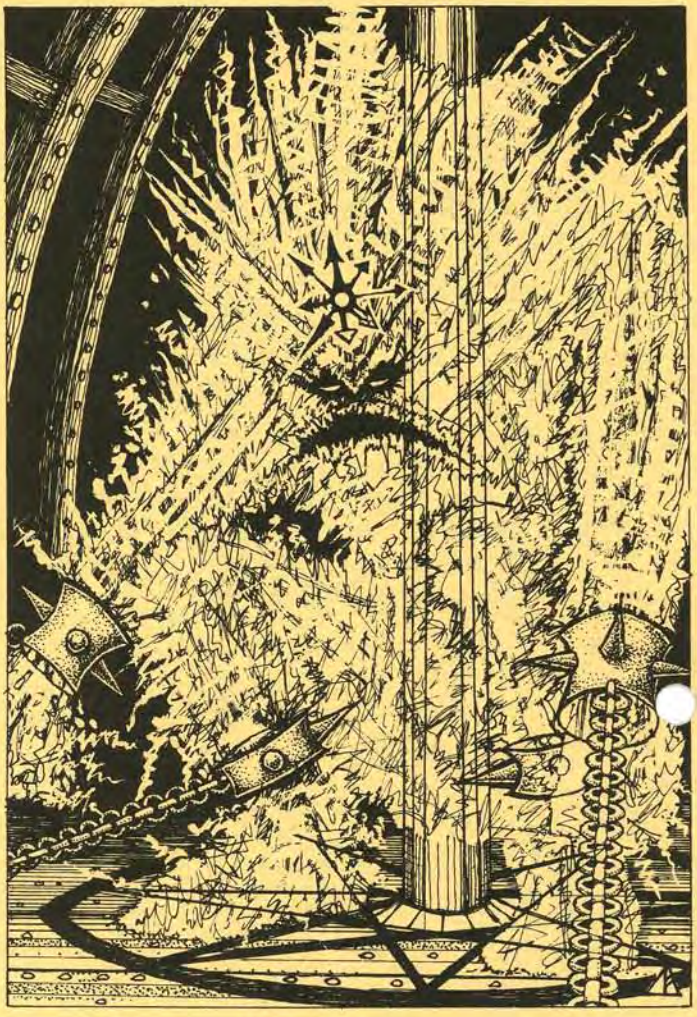
8. A'azzatz's Confine (the engine room)

This torch lit chamber is, in many ways, the heart of the Iron Galleon. Confined within a pentacle drawn around the aft mast of the ship, bound with iron chains, and with the mast passing through his body is A'azzatz, a demon. Summoned by Dyvim Ka'aand and then trapped within this room, it is he that drives the Iron Galleon between the worlds. The air in this chamber is alive with the crackling of his energy, and anyone entering this room will barely be able to discern his shape, save where the Chaos symbol is drawn upon his brow, beneath which black pits mark his eyes and mouth.

A'azzatz hates — although he virtually insensate — everything and everybody. His sole pleasure is consuming the life force of the occasional prisoner Dyvim Ka'aand gives to him, and he will attack anyone who comes within his limited reach.

A'azzatz: AC -1; MV 0" (18"); HD 12; hp 60; #AT 1; D 2-20; SA life draining, slow; SD vulnerable only to iron weapons, all others do no damage whatsoever; Int Non; AL CE; Size L (10' tall); xp 4660; THACO 9; special monster.

A'azzatz's touch drains 1 point of strength in addition to any other damage caused, and the victim must save vs paralyzation or suffer the effects of a **slow** spell as well. For each strength point so drained, A'azzatz gains 10 hit points. Lost strength points are recovered at the rate of one per turn.



9. & 10. Galley and Wine Cellar

These were once sumptuously appointed cabins like the others on board. They are now used as a well-appointed galley for the fleshy inhabitants of the Iron Galleon, and a wine cellar and food store. This is Master Smiles' (see NPCs) small kingdom. He oversees all food preparation with consumate skill, and does not allow anyone else to enter this part of the ship unless they are to carry dishes etc. The food and wine are the spoils of countless wrecks.

The forward cabin (9) contains all that might be expected for a master cook's kitchen. Kitchen knives and the like can be used as weapons (treat as daggers). The aft cabin (10) is the storeroom, where bottles of fine wine are carefully stacked next to the finest foods from many worlds. The door between the two is a modification crudely carried out by Master Smiles.

11. Master Smiles' Cabin

Just across the companionway from his beloved food, Master Smiles' cabin is noteworthy for the large, untidy bed in it and the stacks of books and journals that litter the floor, shelves and most other surfaces. The majority are recipe books and bound volumes of (somewhat indifferent) handwritten poetry, but there are several reference books on such diverse subjects as swords, court etiquette and human anatomy. Unless noted otherwise, all the cabins are lit — like this one — by oil lamps.

12. Jeroaz's Cabin

The furnishings of Jeroaz's cabin are suitably diminuitive, but otherwise unremarkable — a bed, workbench (with the remains of a rusty Iron Sailor spread across it) and a small chest containing theatrical makeup and three suits of jester's motley. At the bottom of the chest is a leather bag which holds a mixed set of coins (worth 250gp) from many worlds, including one made from jade (worth 100gp).

13. Dyvim Ka'aand's Study

In addition to being a thaumaturgical workroom, this is also a library and torture chamber. The walls are lined with grimoires and tomes containing Dyvim Ka'aand's store of magical knowledge. All are

unreadable, as they are written in High Melnibonéan. On one of the shelves is an iron strongbox containing coins, gems and jewellery (worth 12,500gp). Behind it is a jar holding some black, sweet-smelling powder — the drug that Dyvim Ka'aand is feeding to Miriame.

Inlaid in the floor, and projecting around the mast, are eight arrows made of amber, jet and garnet, a huge Chaos symbol. This is part of the binding spell that controls A'azzatz the demon, and cannot be damaged.

Carelessly piled around the room are scrolls, maps and writing implements. In one corner stands an oddly designed, bloodstained chair (originally the ejector seat from a Mig-31 Foxhound), which Dyvim uses for his 'experiments'. Nearby lie his instruments of torture. Hanging from a hook on the mast are a normal broadsword and what appears to be a drinking horn. This is the Horn of Fate. Should it be sounded during the course of this adventure, Aubec will have failed.

14. Kateriona van Hjeok's Cabin

Kateriona's cabin is neat, tidy and comfortably furnished — a large bed, two sea chests of clothes, a chart table, and a wine rack that holds rolled charts and maps (with two bottles of excellent red wine). A box on the chart table contains a single large emerald (worth 1000gp in Aubec's world) and four left gloves made of fine, grey leather. In one corner stands a practise dummy scarred by many sabre cuts, while on the walls hang a small collection of sabres, swords and a pair of matched snaphaunce revolvers (although there is no powder or shot for these).

15. Windlos of Huliss's Cabin

Windlos' cabin lacks any furnishings other than dozens of large cushions, arranged to provide a nest-like hollow in the centre of the room. Two lance-like spears (D 1-6) hang from hooks on the aft wall. There is nothing else of interest or value.

16. Great Cabin

This large chamber is decorated to represent a great hall of a castle or mansion. Banners and flags hang from the walls, and the whole room has an almost pleasant aspect, except for the man-shaped gibbet cage that hangs in one corner.

Two large tables run the length of the room, and at the aft end is a dais with a large jade throne, intricately worked into a represention of ocean breakers. This is the main living area of the Iron Galleon, and the inhabitants will normally (60%) be in here, otherwise they will be found in their own cabins.

17. Dyvim Ka'aand's Cabin

The only piece of furniture that is not actually uncomfortable, poorly designed, incompetantly built and ugly is the bed. The rest of the furnishings — two sea chests, a table and three chairs are unpleasant to behold and use because it amuses Dyvim Ka'aand. Female clothing is [illegible] on every square inch of floor. Propped in one corner are three portraits of Melniboneans, two women and a man - Dyvim Ka'aand's sisters and his father. The hooks from which they once hung now support more of Miriame's dresses.

The major feature of the room is a large pedestal-style compass. The needle is an intricate model of the Iron Galleon, which floats in a small bowl of water. At the bottom of the bowl, the compass rose is a representation of the eight arrows of Chaos. Should this compass be destroyed, the Iron Galleon itself will start to dissolve. This process will take only two turns, beginning with the Iron Sailors becoming unstable (see encounter area 4, above). During the second turn the Iron Galleon will become increasingly insubstantial and finally sink, while Dyvim Ka'aand, Master Smiles and Jeroaz rapidly age, die and decay into heaps of twisted bones. Unless previously freed, A'azzatz will dissolve with the substance of the Iron Galleon, so closely is he bound to it.

Leaving the Iron Galleon

If the Iron Galleon is not destroyed — and perhaps if it is — Aubec and those with him will be able to take the sailing boat from the main deck. Sailing south, Aubec will arrive in Argimiliar in two days, and from there a week's journey on horseback will see him at Castle Kaneloon, where Myshella is waiting. If the boat is not taken and Aubec escapes (perhaps by using one of the life-preservers from the hold), he will eventually be washed up on the coast of Argimiliar; Fate will have taken a hand again.

If Dyvim Ka'aand is alive he will summon an invisible stalker and instruct it to hunt Aubec down. The DM may also care to have Aubec attacked by a group of Aradard's minions (see Player's introduction) as an extra incentive to reach Kaneloon and safety with minimum delay.

Once the Horn of Fate is in Myshella's possession she will cure all Aubec's wounds (restore all lost hit points). The Horn will be sent out of Aubec's world and given into the safekeeping of Roland, until Elric kills him....

Non-Player Characters

The DM should note that some of the characters are potential allies for Earl Aubec. Aubec need only obtain a positive reaction (DMG p63) to apparently enlist the aid of any of the NPCs. Only Windlos of Hueliss and Kateriona van Hjoek and Miriame (for 1-4 hours, until her withdrawal symptoms manifest themselves) will actually stick to an agreement.

Aubec's cat will reflect the true nature of affairs by having nothing to do with any of the NPCs who are not truly on Aubec's side. This is despite the fact that, given the opportunity, Dyvim Ka'aand will positively fawn over the animal.

Dyvim Ka'aand

Dyvim Ka'aand is a Melnibonéan outcast, doomed to wander the seas between the worlds as the result of a chance remark to his patron Chaos Lord, Mabelode the Faceless. In his subsequent journeyings, Dyvim Ka'aand has been the source of legends of the 'Flying Dutchman' type on several different planes of existence.

Although he is an outcast, Dyvim is still a Melnibonéan in all respects. He maintains a pretense of bored, tolerant amusement towards the world, beneath which he is haughty, noble, sophisticated, and amoral. Dyvim knows that mere humans are his inferiors in thoughts, abilities and sensibilities, but because he regards it as 'amusing' to treat his travelling companions as near equals he does so, but his true attitude towards them — one of contempt and frustration at their limitations — is demonstrated by his intention of feeding Master Smiles to A'azzatz the demon (see encounter area 8) when the poet is no longer a source of further entertainment.

Dyvim pulls butterflys' wings off — not because it is cruel, but because it entertains him. He can also be kind and generous for the same reason —not because the act in itself is worthy, but for his private amusement at the reactions of those around him. His moods change rapidly, he respects only ability in himself and others, and fears nothing — but he is always prudent.

Dyvim Ka'aand: AC 2; MV 12"; HD 8+1; hp 44; #AT 1; D by weapon; SA spells — **monster summoning II, shadow monster, shadow magic, animate dead, summon shadow, invisible stalker, shades**; SD 50% immunity to mind influencing spells; AL CE; Size M; xp 1828; THACO 9; S 14, I 17, W 15, C 14, D 17 (+2/-3), Ch 17; **studded leather +2***, **broadsword +3***, **medallion of ESP**; 3 Luck points.

* These items are non-magical — their pluses are due to the high standards of Melnibonean workmanship. The DM should remember that the **medallion of ESP** is of limited use aboard the Iron Galleon because of the ship's construction.

Dyvim is the equivalent of a 12th level spell caster when casting his memorised spells. Unlike normal magic users or illusionists, Dyvim does not have to 'memorize' other spells. His spell grimoires and tomes contain details of spells which are functionally identical to all the magic user and illusionist spells of 6th level and below. After studying these spells for a period of (4d4 x spell level) minutes, Dyvim Ka'aand is able to cast them. There is also a 17% chance that Dyvim Ka'aand will be able to cast any spell from memory. In this case, there is a 5% chance that he will do so incorrectly and the casting will prove to be a waste of time. However, there is an limit to Dyvim Ka'aand's spell casting capability. He cannot cast more than 35 levels of spells in a single day — for example he could cast up to 2 x 1st, 1 x 2nd, 4 x 4th, and 3 x 5th levels.

Dyvim Ka'aand prefers to avoid physical combat (although he is a good swordsman) and will use his **summoning**, **shadow monster** and **shades** spells to create allies for himself in any fight. If any of his crew (other than the Iron Sailors) are killed, he will use his **animate dead** spell to return them to the fray. Dyvim Ka'aand will stop short of killing Aubec outright, as he wants live subjects for his occasional experiments.

If Dyvim discovers that Aubec is carrying Melnibonéan money (an entirely likely occurence, should Aubec be captured), he will be tortured (deduct 1-4 hit points each round) until he confesses 'the truth' — that he stole the coins from a Melnibonéan. Aubec will then be incarcerated in the menagerie (encounter area 7), as a future titbit for A'azzatz.

Jeroaz the Dwarf

Jeroaz the dwarven jester/assassin is cursed with a humour that is cruel, pointed and insulting. Unfortunately, he also lacks the wit to realise that there are some people who should never be insulted at all.

Jeroaz delights in taunting Windlos ('You're no better than the feathered scum in the rigging....'), Master Smiles ('I've heard more poetic attacks of wind than that, manling....") and Miriame — especially Miriame — as Dyvim Ka'aand quietly enjoys seeing her humiliated. Were it not for the fact that Dyvim Ka'aand obtains a secret satisfaction from seeing people discomforted by Jeroaz, the jester would have been killed long ago. The only people that Jeroaz never insults to their faces are Dyvim Ka'aand and Kateriona — he knows that both would kill him on the spot.

Jeroaz: AC 6; MV 12"; Assassin 6; hp 23; #AT 1; D by weapon; SA poison on weapon causes 2-12 additional damage, save at -1; AL CE; Size S (3'); xp 759; THACO 18; S 16 (-/+1), I 15, W 5, C 14, D 15, Ch 6.

Jeroaz wears studded leather armour, a copy of that worn by Dyvim Ka'aand, and uses his enchanted jester's slapstick as a weapon +1 (D 1-8). The slapstick itself is not coated with poison, but the metal itself is tainted with unclean Chaos-stuff.

Master Smiles

Master Smiles is a self-proclaimed master poet of swordplay and the written word and a cultured man. He is simply a dissolute sybarite who actively enjoys the life of contemplative cruelty and barbarity that he indulges in aboard the Iron Galleon. He apes the Melnibonéan habits of Dyvim Ka'aand in a mistaken attempt to achieve an equivalent 'nobility'.

In point of fact, Master Smiles is a poet whose work never scans or rhymes (in the right places), and is tedious in subject, expression and, when he reads it, delivery. Dyvim lets him live for his entertainment value and because 'artists should be supported in these worlds of crass and ignorant humanity'. Master Smiles accepts Dyvim Ka'aand's attitude to him at face value, and has no idea that he is destined to be a hors d'oeuvres for A'azzatz — a fitting fate for someone who has composed sonnets to bottles of wine.

Master Smiles: AC 3; MV 12"; Fighter 5; hp 20; #AT 1 or 2; D by weapon; AL NE; Size M; xp ; THACO 18/20; S 13, I 17, W 3, C 10, D 16 (+1/-2), Ch 17; armed with a longsword (D 1-8) and a main-gauche (D 1-6) and wears **chainmail +1** beneath his robes. Master Smiles always uses both his weapons simultaneously in combat.

Kateriona van Hjeok

Kateriona van Hjeok is a jovial, handsome woman — despite her eye patch and steel prosthetic hand — in her early thirties. The leader of a group of pirates who assaulted the Iron Galleon looking for rich spoils, she was the only one left alive by Dyvim Ka'aand's spells and experiments. Kateriona is also the only female companion to have survived Dyvim Ka'aand growing tired of her company. She now enjoys an almost civil relationship with the Melnibonéan, though she is on her guard at all times, especially with Jeroaz and Master Smiles.

Kateriona van Hjeok: AC 4; MV 12"; Fighter 7; hp 40; #AT 1; D 1-8 or by weapon; AL CN; Size M; xp 950; THACO 11 (13); S 18 (+1/+2), I 12, W 12, C 17, D 18 (+3/-4), Ch 16; wears leather armour, uses her steel hand or a sabre (D 1-6) in combat; 2 Luck points. When using missile weapons Kateriona suffers a -2 penalty 'to hit', thanks to her missing eye.

Kateriona's left hand (the steel one) has a mind of its own. When used in a fight, a result of 15 or better on the 'to hit' roll indicates that the steel hand grasps its target by the throat. Each subsequent round it automatically inflicts 1-8 points of damage, and strangles its victim to death in three rounds regardless of the total damage inflicted. While the hand is doing this Kateriona has no control over it, and it can only be prised away by a successful bend bars/lift gates roll by Kateriona or the victim.

Miriame

Miriame is Dyvim Ka'aand's latest female companion, rescued from the wreckage of a slave galley. Dyvim has amused himself by feeding her a powerful hallucinogenic drug which makes her totally compliant to his will — the withdrawal symptoms are extremely painful. When not under the effects of the drug, Miriame is very careful to obey Dyvim Ka'aand's orders in all matters, and to keep any opinions she holds to herself. She is terrified of Jeroaz and Master Smiles because they once prevented her taking a dose of the drug until the pains had started, and is scared of Windlos because he is different. The drug is gradually destroying her mind, a process which Dyvim Ka'aand finds fascinating.

'Lady' Miriame: AC 10; MV 12"; HD 3 hit points; #AT 1; D 1-4; AL N (CE); Size M; xp 8; THACO 20; S 10, I 5 (12), W 6, C (10) 5, D 9, Ch 10 (17); armed with a kitchen knife (dagger); 2 Luck points. The bracketed statistics are Miriame's original abilities, before the cumulative effects of the drug manifested themselves. If Miriame were to stop taking the drug her characteristics would increase at 1 point per week, although she would be in constant agony while this was happening.

Windlos of Hueliss

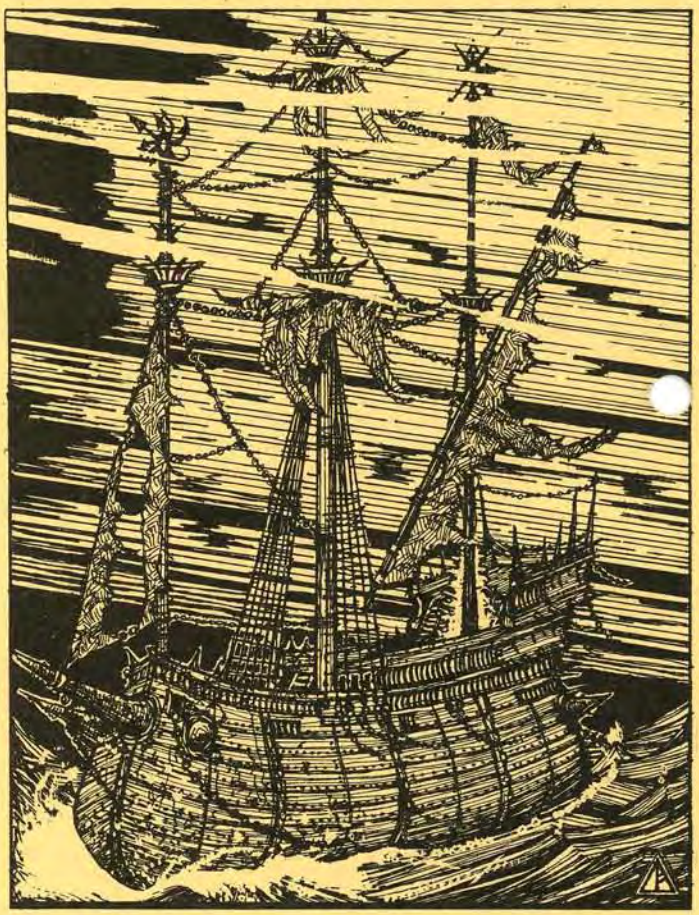
Windlos had the misfortune to land on the Iron Galleon while looking for a roost on which to weather a storm. Before it had ended, the Iron Galleon sailed beyond his world, and Windlos was trapped on board, an unwilling passenger. Dyvim Ka'aand was sufficiently intrigued by the idea of a flying man to keep Windlos alive and unharmed.

Windlos is, at heart, a gentle soul, and he has suffered in sympathy with others who have fallen victim to the whims of Dyvim Ka'aand aboard the Iron Galleon. Behind the grim and silent facade he maintains, he has learnt the value of hatred, especially for Jeroaz, in keeping his hopes of escape — and vengeance for all those he has seen die — alive. The only 'permanent' inhabitant of the Iron Galleon that he has any feeling for is Miriame, as he knows that sooner or later Dyvim will become as bored with her as he has with others in the past.

Windlos of Hueliss: AC 5; MV 12"/36"; HD 7+1; hp 37; #AT 1; D by weapon; MR 10%; AL N (LN); Size M (15' wingspan); xp 1020; THACO 13; S 16 (-/+1), I 15, W 12, C 18, D 17 (+2/-3), Ch 14; uses a (non-magical) **spear +3** in combat; 3 Luck points.

Bibliography

Any of Michael Moorcock's books are worth reading, but to get the right flavour for this adventure the DM might like to read **Master of Chaos, The Sailor on the Seas of Fate** and **The Quest for Tanelorn**. **Elric of Melniboné** perfectly illustrates the behaviour of Melnibonéans. Finally **The Champion of Garathorm** contains a marvellous description of what happens to Dorian Hawkmoon when he becomes obsessed with wargaming — a Suitable Warning to all players and DMs!



Credits

Inspiration: **Michael Moorcock**
Perspiration: **Mike Brunton**
Art: **Jez Goodwin**
Maps: **Paul Ruiz**

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As reviewed in IMAGINE 18

Earth Wood

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EARTHWOOD has been running for over 3 years in America and currently has over 2,000 players. KJC games has been granted the exclusive right to moderate this unique computer-moderated Play-By-Mail game in the UK. Twenty-five players compete all the cities of Earthwood and be the ultimate player. A typical game will last about 18 months with the first knockouts after six months.

Each player is either a king or a fantasy race or a powerful charismatic character in this world of conquest and sorcery. Your character or king controls several groups, each of which is totally independent of the others. You can recruit NPC trolls, wildmen and others into your service, or even control such powerful creatures as dragons or giant spiders. Your characters may also control or capture cities, upon which you can spend gold to improve security, increase your workshop's production, build defences and maintain or enlarge you army. With gold your wizards can undertake magical research to increase their power and knowledge and thus aid your armies in battle. Spies can search out enemy strongholds, attempt to do acts of sabotage, theft and assassination. These are just a few of the options available to a player in EARTHWOOD.

EARTHWOOD is completely computer-moderated, but the turn sheet and replies are written in plain English so that you can easily understand them. No need to look through complex charts and code books to understand this game.

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Graeme Davis &
Colin Greenland

SOLO VOYAGES

An examination of the Solo Gamebooks phenomenon

'Fighting Fantasy – the bestselling phenomenon of our time!' proclaims the blurb on Steve Jackson's 'introductory roleplaying game' of that title, and a glance at any list of juvenile bestsellers will confirm it. So popular are these solo gamebooks, by Jackson, Ian Livingstone, Joe Dever and Gary Chalk, J H Brennan and others, that the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* children's section says she's worried that publishers might stop producing 'real books' altogether! There seems little chance of that. Either the craze will die out, as crazes do, or else computer technology will become so cheap and universally portable that software versions will make the book format (which does have its disadvantages) obsolete. When everybody has a pocket computer they can load up and play on the train, in the doctor's waiting room, or clandestinely in a boring geography lesson, there will be no need to keep flicking pages back and forth and rolling dice any more. For the moment, however, paperback publishers are all leaping onto the solo gamebook bandwagon, and who can blame them?

In the introduction to **Fighting Fantasy**, a handbook designed to bridge the gap between these volumes and rpgs proper, Steve Jackson states that solo gamebooks 'are very much simplified versions of Fantasy Role-Playing Games' but in fact the form originated quite independently. In the 60s experimental writers like Raymond Queneau and B S Johnson produced texts with multiple possible plots arranged in separate sections to be shuffled or selected by the reader. Michael Moorcock did much the same thing on a larger scale with the **Jerry Cornelius** quartet, designed to be read in any order.

The idea of turning this into a game rather than an artistic statement about the randomness of the universe came with **State of Emergency**, a 'Programmed Entertainment' by Dennis Guerrier and Joan Richards, published by Penguin in 1969. You-the-reader join cabinet meetings and top-level political discussions in 'the newly independent Republic of Lakoto', and have several (but not very many) chances to make important decisions about hydro-electric power schemes, representations to the UN, and whether quietly to assassinate a dangerous general. Many choices are dead ends labelled with stern notes like *'Reader: we are going to give you another chance at this point because we think that you are making a fundamental error'*! Ultimately, State of Emergency steers you towards the only possible conclusion the authors will allow: that Lakoto cannot survive without economic and military 'aid' (could it possibly be relevant that both writers are civil servants?). This sort of patronising refereeing survives in some of the junior gamebooks, such as S Eric Meretsky's **Zork** adventures (*'You probably deserve another chance. Go to page 24 and try again'*). The opposite principle, of having as many diverging stories as possible in one volume, has led to books like Edward Packard's **Deadwood City**, published in 1979. Every page ends with a choice, and no two forking paths ever join up again.

With the growing popularity of the roleplaying game phenomenon in the late 1970s came the scenario or adventure module with which the readers of **IMAGINE** magazine will be familiar. One of the major drawbacks of most rpgs, however, is that they require at least two people to participate, one as player and one as referee, and so it wasn't long before some game producers started to publish 'programmed' adventure modules for use with one or other of the popular rpg systems. These modules took the form of a series of cross-referenced paragraphs, each describing a room, encounter or event, so that a lone player could take one or more characters through the adventure without the aid of a referee. Characters, combat and other details were handled according to the rules for the game system in question. This approach was pioneered by the producers of **Tunnels & Trolls** and the now-defunct **The Fantasy Trip**, and solo adventures are now available for a number of systems.

One common analogy used to describe a roleplaying game is that it allows the players to write their own adventure story — *'Have you ever read a book or watched a film and thought "I would never do that" when the hero does something stupid?'* was the kind of line which appeared in some advertising — and as rpgs grew in popularity, the programmable story books began to reappear, stimulated by the growth of rpgs and in some cases trading off them quite heavily (TSR's own **Endless Quest** books, for example, feature the same settings as their more popular rpg

lines, and the game titles are featured on the covers almost as heavily as the titles of the books themselves, although interestingly the **Fantasy Forest** series, clearly aimed at a younger market, trades off the **Dungeons & Dragons** cartoon series rather than the game itself).

Other programmable story books have extended the range of settings to cover the whole gamut of junior fiction. Most prolific is the imported Bantam **Choose-Your-Own-Adventure** series, again with an accompanying series for younger readers, which boasts settings ranging from UFO encounters through deep-sea exploration to discovering lost tribes, while the old favourite of the precocious young detectives is used by Blackie in their **Mystery Squad** series. Teenage Romance gets in on the act with the Corgi **Dream-Your-Own-Romance** series; TSR's much-heralded **Heartquest** series was also expected to cover this market in many quarters, but instead consists of fantasy adventures rather condescendingly slanted towards the young female reader. And, almost inevitably, Indiana Jones is giving young readers the chance to become his kid sidekick in the Sphere Indiana Jones **Find-Your-Fate** series. Even the **Famous Five**, those normally clean-living, wholesome middle-class anachronisms, have succumbed to the deadly lure of the gamebook. Two of their adventures have already been released in gamebook form by those dastardly Hodder & Stoughton fellows, and two more are to follow.

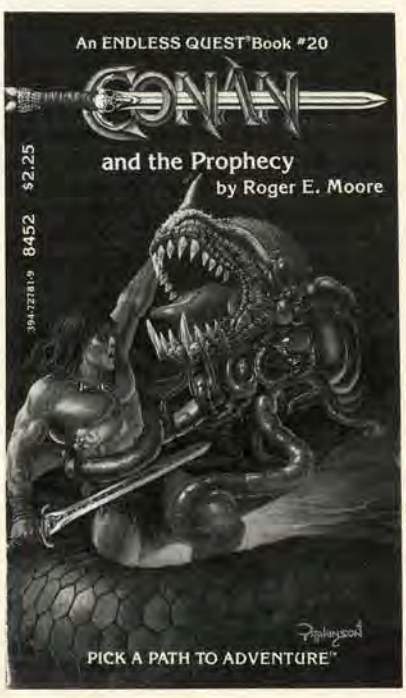
Bantam's **Time Machine** series uses 'real' historical settings, giving some indication of the educational possibilities of this kind of book, but how well they fulfil this potential is open to question.

The impetus which has come from the growth of the rpg hobby shows most strongly in the popularity of the gamebook series. These are derived from the solo programmed adventures mentioned previously, and feature a simple game system at the beginning of the book. Instead of just accepting the static role of presidential adviser, young explorer or ringbearer provided by the authors, you-the-reader can now enter the world of the text with your own rpg character, in the form of a number of attributes generated by dice rolls. The possibilities for combat, luck and advantage are enormously increased. So is the likelihood of getting killed and having to start all over again. Now, add a goal — one desirable end among the multitude of possible outcomes — and the quest is on.

The better gamebooks are designed according to a secret map, just like a dungeon plan, so that choices correspond to available routes and the frustrated adventurer will be better informed next time around (provided you take the trouble to make a map or keep notes as you go). A common fault of the inferior gamebook is the sense of disappointment in finding that your second and third choices merely lead to the same events happening in a different order, because the author has skimped on the design.

There are at present five gamebook series on the market: **Fighting Fantasy, Sorcery!, Grailquest, Lone Wolf** and **Demonspawn**. As the titles suggest, the bulk of the adventures take place in a fantasy setting, although **Starship Traveller** uses the Fighting Fantasy system well in an SF adventure, and the forthcoming **Freeway Fighter** in the same series is an obvious tie-in with Ian Livingstone's popular **Battlecars** boardgame. The other series are all fantasy of one kind or another. Sorcery! is a development of the Fighting Fantasy system, and is set in a similar generalised fantasy world, while Grailquest uses a Disney-esque Arthurian setting and Lone Wolf has a custom-built, if somewhat derivative, fantasy world as the backdrop for its linked adventures.

As far as the design of the adventures themselves is concerned, there seem to be two basic structures, which for the sake of argument we can call 'tree' and 'rope'. The tree structure is typified by Deadwood City, with a number of diverging paths leading to several alternative endings. The Bantam Choose-Your-Own-Adventure books are another example of this structure, priding themselves on the number of possible outcomes. The rope structure, on the other hand, has a number of strands which allow a certain amount of freedom but remain firmly braided around the main plotline or the author's idea of the 'right' course of action; State of Emergency and the Zork series mentioned above use this structure. The gamebooks all use the rope structure, for several reasons. One reason is that, like rpg adventures, they deal with a specific quest, and if the player is allowed to diverge too far from this the point of adventure is lost. Also, the gamebooks' rpg heritage has led to their giving the player a great many detailed decisions, so that they have a great many short entries rather than the fewer, longer entries of the programmable story books, and the provision of diverging



plotlines with a number of alternative endings would make the whole structure insanely complicated. A gamebook of, say, 400 entries has only one or two possible endings — the character either completes the quest or dies in the attempt — and if widely divergent plotlines leading to a number of different endings were to be written into the adventure, it would need an additional couple of hundred entries for each divergent plotline. The result of this would be that the books would become a lot bigger, filled with material which has no real relevance to the main thread of the story, and readers would either be constantly getting lost up blind alleys or would be paying more money for extra entries which they wouldn't use.

Perhaps because the gamebook is still in its infancy as a genre, many of the adventures are 'zoo dungeons', with little or no reasoning behind monster placement — aging D&Ders like Graeme are reminded of early Judges Guild products like the **GenCon IX** Dungeons. The first few Fighting Fantasy adventures suffer from this, although **Deathtrap Dungeon** tries to justify it in the same way as the Death Test modules for The Fantasy Trip by turning the adventure into a kind of gladiatorial entertainment for a powerful ruler with a private menagerie of monsters. The later Fighting Fantasy books, such as the **Island of the Lizard King**, show some improvement in this respect, but the Lone Wolf series stands out above the rest, with very few illogical or gratuitous encounters.

The game systems used in these books must of necessity be less complex than those of a 'full' rpg, with fewer attributes and simpler combat and magic systems. In some cases this simplicity has led to crudity and lack of realism, but some systems show a great deal of elegance and thoughtful design. Fighting Fantasy and Lone Wolf both use a skill attribute to govern combat, while the developed Grailquest magic system in **The Den of**

Dragons is more complete than that of many 'full' rpgs, with Life Point costs for each spell, and a chance of spell failure. The Sorcery! magic system features a Stamina cost for each spell, and also has material requirements, so that the adventurer must collect various weird and wonderful items along the way (and what else do you do with a green wig?), but it can turn into a test of memory as much as of ability.

Most systems require the use of two six-sided dice, but there have been some attempts to get round this, making the book itself the only necessary item of equipment and making it easier to play on a train or wherever without dropping your dice all over the place. The Sorcery! books have a random dice roll result printed at the bottom of each page, so that the player can flip to a page at random whenever a dice roll is required, while the Lone Wolf books have a 0-9 random number table in the back of the book, the idea being that you close your eyes and stab with a pencil. A nice idea, but it does become a little unwieldy in practice, and we tended to lose our places as we flipped or stabbed; and it can sometimes be difficult to be completely honest about the results.

One question which few of the gamebooks tackle with any conviction is that of character advancement and experience. In one form or another this is a feature of most rpgs, but it is largely ignored by the gamebooks. Fighting Fantasy requires a new character at the start of each adventure, with no equipment or treasure carried over, and this is fair enough given that the adventures are unconnected. Sorcery! on the other hand is explicitly continuous, the adventures going together to make up a four-part quest, but apart from the possibility of carrying over the character and equipment to the next book and the occasional statement that an encounter or item will be useful in later books, the question of experience is ignored. Lone Wolf pays lip service to the idea by permitting the character one additional Kai Discipline (the quasi-magical mental powers which serve Lone Wolf as a magical system) at the beginning of the second and subsequent books, but lip service is all it is. Only in Grailquest is the idea of character advancement really tackled; each fight won or problem solved earns the character one experience point, and at the end of each adventure experience points can be traded off for extra Life Points.

Another frequent criticism of nearly all the gamebooks is the 'instant death' situation — you walk into a room and the roof spontaneously collapses, for example, or you are given no opportunity to check for traps in a corridor and seconds later find yourself impaled on poisoned spikes at the bottom of a deep pit. In many cases this is due to bad or lazy design, but these and similar situations can arise out of the limitations of the gamebook format — there is simply not enough room to cover all the options which rpg players take for granted.

A SOLO FANTASY GAMEBOOK
GRAIL QUEST
J H Brennan
The Castle of Darkness
With detachable combat system and score sheet for easy reference
1

These problems point out the inherent limitations of the gamebook format, and for this reason it could be argued that the fear of solo adventure books forcing 'real' books out of the market is not completely justified — sooner or later players will turn to one of the 'full' rpgs in search of greater freedom of action.

Events have, indeed, turned full circle with the publication of **Fighting Fantasy: The Introductory Roleplaying Game**, in which Steve Jackson turns the Fighting Fantasy gamebook system into a 'full' rpg for refereed group play, with advice for the aspiring Games Master and two Fighting Fantasy adventures in the familiar 'dungeon' format. At £1.75 it is the cheapest and most widely distributed roleplaying game on the market, but it does suffer from the total lack of a magic system or any provision for character advancement. The Fighting Fantasy series has become the focus of a fairly large marketing exercise on the part of Puffin Books, with book and software packages and the launch of the quarterly **Warlock** magazine, mentioned in IMAGINE #15. Software is also planned for the Lone Wolf series, which is supported by a range of figures from Citadel Miniatures and a Lone Wolf club, with newsletters, competitions and other events. Interestingly, the Zork storybook series has apparently sprung from a successful series of computer adventure game, widely acclaimed by those who are knowledgeable about such things. The quality of the adventures has evidently not survived their translation into book form, and we hope that the Fighting Fantasy and Lone Wolf adventures will not suffer in the same way when they are made into computer games.

Hodder & Stoughton's Famous Five series deserves a special mention since it is neither a pure gamebook nor a pure storybook. There is no game system as in Fighting Fantasy or the other gamebook series, but the format of over 300 short entries is distinctive of a gamebook rather than a storybook. The choices, in fact, are very few; in most cases the entries end with a puzzle or coded message, to be sorted out using the expensively produced Codebook, Map, Measure and Torch cards which come with the book. The poor reader can't even decide which way our heroes go — whenever a choice of routes presents itself everyone automatically wants to go in different directions and you have to roll the expensively-produced special die (each face has the silhouette of one of the gang, with one 'mystery' face) to see whose will prevails. And as if that wasn't enough, you've got to solve the mystery before your expensively-produced Picnic cards run out, because when you run out of cherry cake and ginger beer — gosh! — you jolly well have to start all over again! The book and other components are of very good quality, but the whole package costs a thumping £3.95 — slightly more than two Sorcery! volumes, and not much less than three of any other series. We think we know what most readers will prefer.

IMAGINE readers are in a special position with regard to solo gamebooks. The very existence of a book like Steve Jackson's Introductory Roleplaying Game implies that the majority of gamebook readers pick them up well before discovering anything about D&D or any other rpg, and our analysis of the structure and systems used is more detailed, perhaps, than most gamebook writers would expect from the market they're aiming at.

But how do the solo gamebooks measure up as stories — as books to be read, if not in the usual way and order? It goes without saying that no gamebook could possibly accomplish more than a part of what a conventional fantasy novel can. Extended and developed characterisation, description, suspense and even dialogue are all out of the question in a text which is going to be read only in selected fragments (unless, of course, it is Grailquest, in which case the character-

isation and dialogue are more of a curse than a boon). What remains is an episodic narrative, its scenes mostly very brief — its action abbreviated too, usually into ritualised bouts of violence — and its momentum provided either by one all-important goal or by the need to accumulate information and solve obstructing mysteries. It's more like the form of a comic strip than a prose narrative.

Although the point of a gamebook will always be the game rather than the story, the game is bound to be more absorbing if the writer pays attention to that side of the design — compare, for example, the GENCON IX Dungeons mentioned above to the 'G' and 'D' modules for AD&D. When the writer of a gamebook takes on the role of Dungeon Master, he or she also inherits the DM's responsibility to create a satisfying atmosphere and make sure that the players are kept involved. Is the dead end really a dead end, or would it be worth looking for a secret door? Computer game programmers, too, do better if they devote plenty of memory to strong, persuasive text, rather than packing it all with beautifully intricate little subroutines that just look curt and uninteresting on the screen. A DM can rely on contributions from the players themselves, but the solo gamebook writer has to hold the audience alone. The form can be frustrating enough already, with its loops, dead ends, pitfalls and incidental labyrinths, especially when you're slogging around for the fourth time because you still haven't figured out how to defuse the exploding chest. If, on top of that, you get the feeling that the writer doesn't care — that the text is disjointed, needlessly repetitive, or just flippant — then you'll be sorely tempted to chuck in The Quest for the Mystic Jewelled Thingummy of Fabled Wassaname and watch the box instead.

The main motivation to try again will always be that you think you stand a better chance this time. For this reason, gamebooks where you get clobbered whatever you do — or, in some peculiar cases, where you win whatever you do — are disenchanting. So are the gamebooks where the different areas of play don't seem to relate to each other, and you find yourself suddenly back at the west bank of the river staring stupidly at the same leaky ferry you rowed across not half an hour ago. One of the great attractions of rpgs, whether group or solo, is the sense of being in a consistent, controlled environment, where actions have specific consequences and the rules — and the geography — don't change when you're not looking. Reality may well be full of contradictions, feeble plot construction and inadequate characterisation — but Game Masters shouldn't emulate it.

Graeme Davis & Colin Greenland

b) Without bothering to look, you attack the nearest bush with your trusty sword. A very angry looking, large hairy creature emerges, holding his rear end with one hand and a book called **Beyond the Wall of Tears**, one of the many solo adventures available with **Tunnels & Trolls** role-playing system, in the other.

The creature advances, menacingly. Your blows are useless (you already hit its one vulnerable spot). Terror stricken, you cringe before the behemoth, ready for death to strike.

"Look luv", it says, "if you want to borrow my copy you'll just have to wait till I'm finished".

Amazed, you back away from the scene. To avoid any further such confrontations, you resolve to buy **Tunnels & Trolls** from your nearest retailer.

CHRIS HARVEY GAMES

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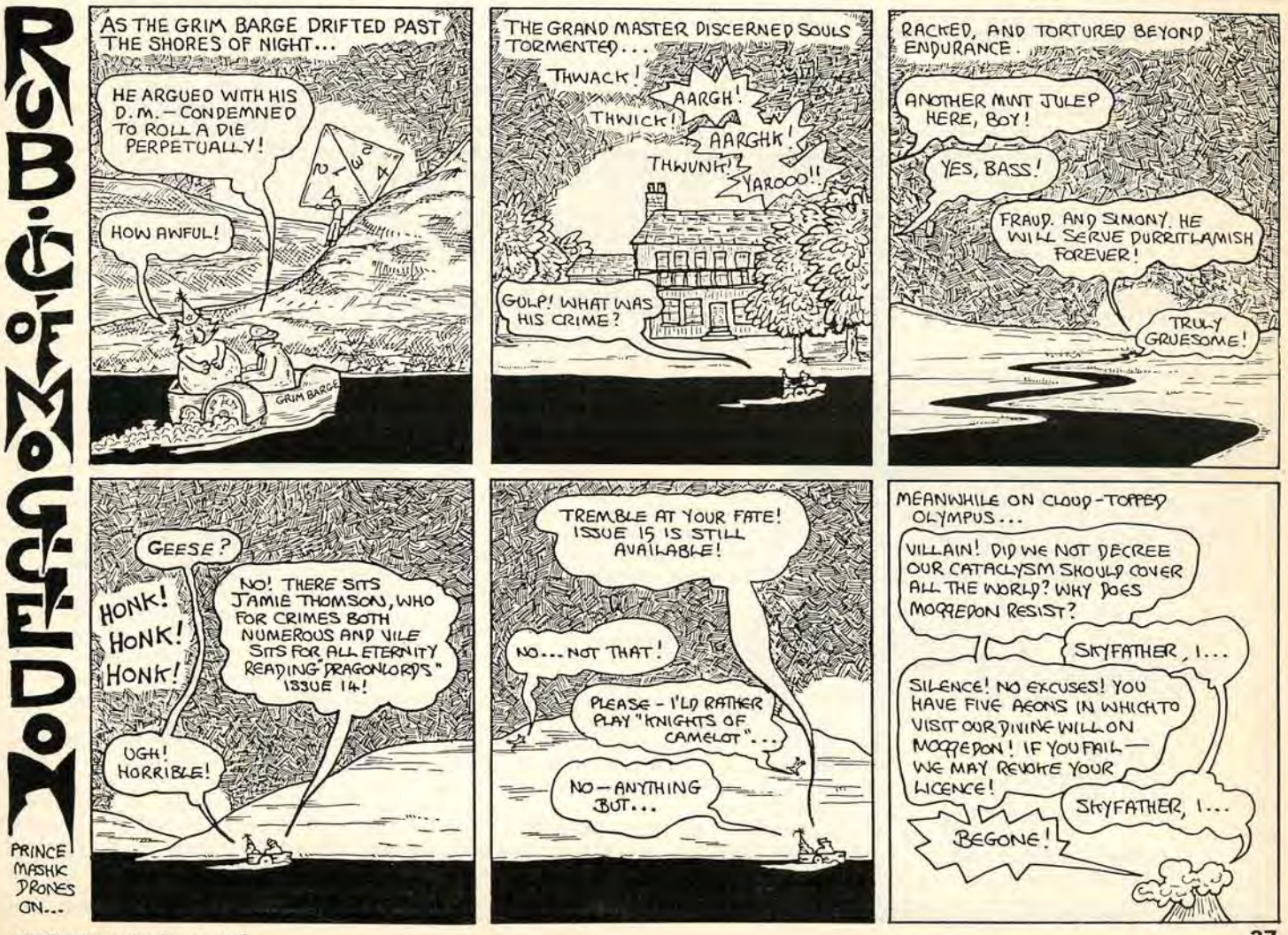
PRINCE MASHIC DRONES ON...
AS THE GRIM BARGE DRIFTED PAST THE SHORES OF NIGHT...
HE ARGUED WITH HIS D.M. — CONDEMNED TO ROLL A DIE PERPETUALLY!
HOW AWFUL!
GRIM BARGE
THE GRAND MASTER DISCERNED SOULS TORMENTED...
THWACK!
AARGH!
THWICK!
AARGHK!
THWUNK!
YAROOO!!
GULP! WHAT WAS HIS CRIME?
RACKED, AND TORTURED BEYOND ENDURANCE.
ANOTHER MINT JULEP HERE, BOY!
YES, BASS!
FRAUD. AND SIMONY. HE WILL SERVE DURRITHAMISH FOREVER!
TRULY GRUESOME!
GEESE?
HONK! HONK! HONK!
NO! THERE SITS JAMIE THOMSON, WHO FOR CRIMES BOTH NUMEROUS AND VILE SITS FOR ALL ETERNITY READING "DRAGONLORDS" ISSUE 14!
UGH! HORRIBLE!
TREMBLE AT YOUR FATE! ISSUE 15 IS STILL AVAILABLE!
NO... NOT THAT!
PLEASE - I'LD RATHER PLAY "KNIGHTS OF CAMELOT"...
NO — ANYTHING BUT...
MEANWHILE ON CLOUD-TOPPED OLYMPUS...
VILLAIN! DID WE NOT DECREE OUR CATACLYSM SHOULD COVER ALL THE WORLD? WHY DOES MOPPEDON RESIST?
SKYFATHER, I...
SILENCE! NO EXCUSES! YOU HAVE FIVE AEONS IN WHICH TO VISIT OUR DIVINE WILL ON MOPPEDON! IF YOU FAIL — WE MAY REVOKE YOUR LICENCE!
SKYFATHER, I...
BEGONE!

NEW FROM TSR

UK 5 — EYE OF THE SERPENT

UK 6 — ALL THAT GLITTERS....

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c) As you awake, you see a very large hairy creature trying to ransack your body. "What are you looking for", you cry timorously.

"**Tunnels & Trolls** solo adventures like **Misty Wood, City of Terrors** an' that. Got any John?"

"N-No" you murmur, expecting a quick death in return for your negative answer.

"THEN GET SOME!!" it shouts, as it shuffles away, mumbling. As you leave, you realise that only luck saved you from certain death. Better get the **Tunnels & Trolls** role-playing system and solo adventures — just to be on the safe side. Go to your nearest retailer to gain some real experience points.

CHRIS HARVEY GAMES

P.O. Box 100, Bath Street,
Walsall, W. Midlands.

DIALOG

by Lew Pulsipher

Stamping out evil-alignment parties and non-evil competition...

It was another beautiful 80-degree late October day at Castle Puls. I sure didn't need my Alter Ego around, but he's hard to escape, and soon enough he had something to say.

'I've been reading about the adventures of entirely evil-alignment parties, Puls. Whaddya think of that?'

'Well, the usual argument is that it's just fun and games. And lord knows there's a little evil in everyone, though I've never felt many evil urges.'

'Ha!'

'Well, nothing I needed to express in a game. After all, my Alter Ego is my "evil half", Alter.'

'I know people who'd disagree. But some people take evil characters seriously. For example, a lass in the DRAGON 89 Forum criticises the playing of evil characters because of the psychological effects on the players.'

'Far be it from me to encourage evil types, Alter, but I don't think people play evil alignments because they enjoy being evil. What they enjoy is competition, and they refuse to accept the basic premise of the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** game, which is co-operation among all the players. So they do what they can to restore the competitive aspect.'

'Which is to attack the other players.'

'Right. I remember the first **AD&D®** game I played in Britain in 1976. I was playing with a bunch of Diplomacy players and my character spent the whole time with his back against one wall or another, watching the other characters. The referee encouraged that sort of thing by limiting the encounters to a few weak creatures. We didn't need to co-operate in order to survive, so those inclined to backstabbing could go right ahead. And you know how most **Diplomacy** players are. But they were quite cheerful about it, the way most of them would be about backstabbing an ally in Diplomacy -- "all part of the game, old chap, not evil at all, you know".'

'OK, so they're really interested in competition, not evil. But a lot of players and refs don't want to have anything to do with evil characters. How does one discourage it?'

'As for players, you know what one of my good alignment characters does when an evil character, player or otherwise, tries to get into an adventuring party.'

'Yes, you always discover the guy before the start, given the detective powers of magic, and then you string him up by his heels or some such.'

'Alter, that's not true. I never string them up, I just make sure that they either truly convert, or they never try the trick again.'

'And the only way to insure the latter is to kill them.'

'No, I let them die in the true cause -- why waste a skilled man when you can have him die for you during the expedition?'

'Puls, don't you think some people would regard this as acting evil rather than good?'

'Perhaps. But I believe in "Holy War" campaigns where evil and good alignments wage perpetual religious war --'

'The dirtiest kind.'

'-- and Good does not equal stupid.'

'That's fine for a way for players to discourage evil, as long as the good guys aren't outnumbered. Slapping their hands and saying "no, no" won't discourage them, but death will. But how does the referee discourage competition among players?

'Partly by sheer force of personality he can persuade players to work together. But primarily, he can force them to co-operate by making the adventure too tough for characters who don't co-operate.'

'Like the "combined arms" idea in the military. Artillery, tanks and infantry working together are much more powerful than the three arms acting independently. And so a bunch of different-classed (or different skilled) frp characters are much more powerful when they co-operate than when they compete with one another.'

'Right, or "the strength of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". And tough adventures will even work, to some extent, against another sort of competitors.

'You mean there's non-evil competition?'

'Yes, to try to "restore" competition to an essentially non-competitive game, some players compete to see who can build up the most powerful character. In fact, I think the desire to compete is the origin of some "Monty Haul" campaigns. Since the players' only objective is to become more powerful than the others -- to "beat" the other players through the game-piece known as a character -- the only way the referee can enable the players to enjoy the game is to give away lots of powers.'

'So a referee who doesn't want to encourage this competition fights it by making adventures tougher.'

'But he also offers rewards that benefit the party as a whole, or everyone in the party equally, rather than benefitting individual characters. That means there may not be many offensive or one-person defensive magic items. But in the long run, this sort of player might become disenchanted with that referee, because he doesn't allow the fun of competing.'

Alter had nothing to say -- for once -- but I was now in a mood Alter dreads: "Professor Pulsipher" he calls it. 'There's another sort of evil players who doesn't have evil, per se, in mind at all. He just wants to avoid any restrictions on his activity. In most campaigns he could run a neutral character and still avoid significant restrictions --'

'The "thug" school of thought.'

'-- yes, but in other campaigns, where evil and good characters blithely mix in the same party, these folks may as well be evil. There are no disadvantages, and many advantages, in that case. It has little or nothing to do with enjoyment of evil acts. As for the objection that playing evil characters for the sake of enjoying evil acts is unhealthy, I don't know. Extreme and frequent sadism or other "sickie" acts may ruin a campaign, but I'd rather have someone work out his frustrations in a game than try them out for real.'

'Anyway, Puls, the DRAGON writer's point seems to be that an excessive, perhaps compulsive, interest in committing evil acts in the game is a sign of serious real-life problems, lack of confidence and a feeling of helplessness, not just harmless fun; and the game is not helping the problems and may be aggravating them because the person is trying to work them out in a game rather than face the problems of real life.'

'Sounds reasonable. I'd say that excess of any sort is usually a sign of real-life problems, whether it's an excessive interest in evil acts, or simply an excessive interest in playing the game ot the detriment of the rest of life's activities. We Classical/Apollonian types prefer "moderation in all things", unlike certain Romantics...' Alter tried to look innocent when I said this. 'The question is, does "working out frustrations" really work them out, eliminate them, or does it just encourage the individual to try them for real? I'm inclined to think the former, but not even psychologists know for sure.'

Lew Pulsipher

Micro Reviews

PIROMANIA

(Automata UK Ltd, £6)

As the title suggests it's the PiMan again, this time in an arcade game. The plot involves our beloved PiMan running around setting fire to Walter's house; you are Walter trying to put the fires out, and to help you there are fire extinguishers and taps scattered around the various floors of the house. At intervals during this hectic fire-fighting a *pink elephant* tap-dances across the top floor (no, I am not drunk!)

The game looks easy and indeed can be so, but there are doors scattered all over the place and a fire can only be put out from one side of an open door — or the wind will blow the water back in your face. This can create problems: if the ladders burn there may be no way to get to the fire. If this happens you have two choices; you can use your expandable ladder if it hasn't been burnt — this means dropping your bucket, picking up the ladder, placing it and going back for the bucket, a time-consuming business — or you can wait for the door.

When all the fires have been put out, a strange boomerang-shaped object goes wild, flying across the different floors at a great speed; don't worry, this is to let you know that you have moved on to the next level. This exciting event produces the same screen. On the seven levels I have done the screen did not change once. Come on, Automata, surely you can do better than this!

On screen three, the PiMan appears at last. He is easily discouraged, however; just throw a bucket of water over him and he falls to the ground, not to be seen again until the next screen. The difficulty increases by there being more fires as you progress.

The loading screen is different; I'm still not sure whether I like it. The graphics are quite good and the use of sound is there. The software supports Kempston and Sinclair Interface 2, the choice of keys is good, almost every key on the keyboard doing something. You only see you score at the end of a screen so don't worry. A high score table is included and you get an extra life per level.

The game loads in about 4 minutes. I had difficulty loading my copy, trying three tape decks before it loaded. The signal on the tape seemed very quiet; again this is uncalled for as the Spectrum will load almost anything. Software houses should manage to produce a tape that loads on any tape deck.

The other side of the tape contains a 'song' called *Put The Cat Out Mother*, by Safety and the Matches! This is a terrific song and the best thing about the tape. Arcade games generally don't hold my interest long. This one, however, is not bad, so if you are into arcade action and high score tables, I recommend it.

Daniel Canavan

UNITED

(Cases Computer Simulations Ltd)

As manager of a fourth division football team, your aim is to build a successful side and lead them to League Championship.

With £6,500,000 you buy your players from those available; then it's on to the match. If you are playing at home you are given six skill points with which to strengthen your team. Then you are asked how you intend to play — a number on the scale of 0 to 10 (Clean = 0, Dirty = 10). Playing dirty gives more skill points but a greater chance of being booked or sent off.

A football pitch is displayed and with the sound of a referee's whistle the action starts. This is the most disappointing part of the game. The use of graphics is limited; the path of the ball is shown on the pitch by moving lines and the ball position by a small circle; the colour of the circle overwrites the colour of the pitch markings. Sound is limited to the occasional referee's whistle, and a few seconds of noise at critical points of the game.

After each match, a list of the results is shown, and the league table. Finally you receive the money and value points you have earned. The value points can be used to train players or to scout the opposition.

This Spectrum game (written in BASIC) is slightly slow, but well written except for the graphics. Illegal entries are ignored and warning messages are displayed when you do something wrong (such as try to play a game with only 10 men). I soon found myself skipping the graphics to get on with the game quickly. But still, it's a good and fairly difficult game which has an addictive quality that will keep you coming back for more.

Luke Renouf

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AVENGERS ASSEMBLED!

The MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game is aimed at people wanting to roleplay Marvel characters rather than those wanting to invent their own heroes. Given this, **Avengers Assembled!** will be an essential purchase for most players of the game. What it contains is complete character statistics for all the Avengers there have ever been plus 20-odd of their more regular allies and enemies, including Kang, Ultron and S H I E L D. There are also plans of the Avengers Mansion, the usual high quality Marvel artwork, and the biggest collection of TM signs ever seen in any rpg publication.

Personal preferences aside, the Avengers are probably the ideal group to choose if you are going to run an extended campaign using MSH. There have been so many members and roster changes that your players are almost certain to be able to pick a character each without conflict over who plays which particular favourite, or someone getting lumbered with a character that doesn't suit their style of play.

There are a few grossly powerful characters among them, and I'd recommend that Thor in particular be kept as an NPC who can rescue the players in times of dire emergency, but the only real wimps, Wasp and Hawkeye, are among the most interesting characters to play. My only complaint is that many of the villains are also very tough, the sort of folks who take on the Avengers single-handed and are normally only defeated thanks to their arrogance and over-confidence, and will therefore be quite difficult for the GM to handle.

Overall, a much-needed publication which will sell very well. I look forward to further publications along similar lines, TSR, please.

Pete Tamlyn

MURDERWORLD!

Murderworld! is the third module produced for use with the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game. Despite Arcade being the headline villain, the module does not feature the X-men, but rather the Fantastic Four. Fear not though, Oh FF fans among you, for many of the group's more regular opponents also make an appearance, including the inimitable Victor von Doom.

But what of the module? Well now that there are several of these things on the market we can start comparing them. The format is much the same as that of the previous offerings: card cover doubling as GM's quick reference shield, detailed plot neatly divided into chapters, nicely drawn maps, and illustrations by Marvel artists. The plot, in general terms, is an improvement on the other modules, in that there is more than one theme in it, giving the players more to think about. It does, however, suffer from a particular problem — Arcade.

Trying to use Murderworld as a setting for a scenario is not easy. To begin with, you have to get the heroes there as Arcade's prisoners, meaning that you have to arrange for the players to be defeated. Managing this without making it seem that you have fixed it so they had no chance (something which always upsets players) is difficult. Then there is Arcade's passion for making each hero suffer individually. The players have to be split up and each one put through his 'game' separately. This either leads to some very bored players and time-flow problems or to a very confused GM. Finally it is essential to the operation of Murderworld that the heroes do not realise that they are in one of Arcade's 'games'. As the module only provides a single mapsheet showing the whole of the Murderworld complex, this is pretty difficult.

To sum up, a workmanlike job done with a bad basic idea. The module is a must for FF fans on account of the details given of the team, the Baxter building and Dr Doom, but for the general purchaser it is not such a good prospect.

Pete Tamlyn

IJ1/2: RAIDERS/TEMPLE OF DOOM

The first question to be answered about any game scenario which is based on a book or a film is how closely it sticks to the original. In both the modules IJ1 **Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom** and IJ2 **Raiders of the Lost Ark**, the answer is very closely indeed. These adventure packs are clearly designed not just to give players the flavour of the films, but to allow players to recreate the films' events.

The problem with this is that the results are often rather deterministic. Wu Han will die at the beginning of IJ1 — he has to, since his player will then go on to play Short Round for the rest of the game. This kind of thing ensures that only one player (the lucky recipient of the Indiana Jones character) will have any continuity of character. Opportunities for characterisation will thus be rather skimpy.

That's how the scenarios play — what about the contents? Each is an impressively produced package containing copious maps, cardboard figures and stills from the films to add atmosphere. Each is structured in a series of 'episodes' (designed to resemble the old adventure serials which inspired the Indiana Jones films) which are in turn sub-divided into 'scenes' giving an authentic feeling of participating in a film. In IJ1 each of the episodes ends with a 'Cliffhanger', some of which, it has to be said, are a little contrived — IJ2 quite rightly dispenses with this convention.

There really isn't much to choose between these two modules — both cover their film with admirable completeness. My major gripe is that they both stick too closely to the films — apart from the odd occasion here and there, the modules attempt to steer the characters into replaying the exact events of the films. Given that anyone playing in these scenarios has almost certainly seen the films, I'd anticipate the game being somewhat spoiled by such rigid adherence to the films' plots. Whatever the designers may say to the contrary, in practice it would be very difficult for a group of players to change the ending of the film.

Paul Mason

Avalon Hill's second 'home-grown' RPG announces itself as a *'roleplaying adventure game of travel through time & space'*. That said, you will probably still be surprised, as I was, by what lies within its boxed exterior.

There are two booklets in this set (along with some polyhedral dice), one detailing the rules and the second aptly though perhaps somewhat unoriginally, named **The Book of Foes** describing monsters and humans for encounter purposes.

Unlike their counterparts in **Powers & Perils** (reviewed in #19), the authors have at least attempted to explain the basis of role-playing games. However, only a small amount of space is allocated for this purpose, so it is hardly surprising that it fails to do this satisfactorily.

Now back to that surprise I was talking about. The surprise is the whole new concept which LoC brings. It is not simply an Frpg or SFrpg, historical or present-era — it is all of these yet none of them. Confused? You will be!

In order that this multi-type 'anything goes' RPG can succeed one must treat player characters as something special in that they can possess some remarkable abilities which the general populace cannot. Just why this is so is not explained, which can somewhat detract from suspension of disbelief.

One would think that this system needs a horrendously complicated character generat-

LORDS OF CREATION

ion method, but this couldn't be further from the truth. There are only five primary requisites generated with 2d10: Muscle (strength), Speed (dexterity), Stamina (constitution), Mental (IQ) and Luck. A vital characteristic is the player's Personal Force (one tenth of sum of PRs) which governs the level of the characters, their number of skills and their powers.

These factors computed, the player must choose skills equal to the number of his Personal Force (PF). A list of 21 is given, each divided into five levels. These operate such that (for example) a 3rd level medic has those skills available to a 1st, 2nd and 3rd level medic. A character may gain additional skills or advance one already possessed if the PF increases. Details of the skills themselves are scanty but deliberately so: they are not intended as fixed abilities but rather as a basis upon which GMs can base their decisions and assign chances of success. 'Heroic' adventuring is probably encouraged by this.

Advancement in LoC is based on increasing PF. During a gaming session the GM may award experience, and this may be expended at the end of play to increase any specific PR by 1d6. This in turn increases the character's PF, allowing new skills to be gained and for each ten levels of PF, 1 power.

Up until now everything has been pretty simple and straightforward, in fact just like many other RPGs, but powers change everything! The first basic problem to overcome is why they exist. Unfortunately we are not informed and the GM must reach some rationale alone. The powers themselves operate on similar lines to the skills, and range from Cyborg (eg weapon implant, plasteel body) to poltergeist (eg sound control, teleportation). An impressive array adding an exciting new dimension to play. Other powers gained automatically on reaching a certain PF level are mainly to enable the GM to create special encounters/scenarios and include the ability to see into other dimensions, and time & space travel.

The combat system is fairly straightforward. It is set out so that additional rules may be added as players and GM become more familiar with the rules. Also included in this booklet is a very extensive equipment list covering 'modern', 'futuristic' and 'antique' items. Unfortunately descriptions are scanty, reducing the list's usefulness. There is a useful section for GMs at the rear of the booklet providing ideas for adventures and unusual settings in which they can take place. With such a system the possibilities are limitless.

The foes booklet is much like any other of its ilk, but is disappointing in that it lacks detail. Artwork throughout excels, however, as too in the main rules booklet.

Notably, no introductory scenario is included with the rules set, but the GM is informed of the existence of such several times in the text. This is the **HORN OF ROLAND** which is recommended as a starting base for adventurers.

This module is for 4 to 10 neophyte (lowest level) characters. It is certainly long enough to provide for several gaming sessions, but although it is divided into six scenarios, each does not necessarily constitute a session's play. The author favours a 'linear' approach in that most encounters occur in a set pattern beyond the control of players' actions, but this does not detract from the playability of the scenario. The plot behind each section is well documented as are the encounters. In some cases this can be overpowering, requiring several readings by the GM, and can slow play considerably. However, anyone seriously considering GMing LoC would be well advised to buy **Horn of Roland** if only to see just how good an adventure can be!

All in all, LoC is a powerful new concept in RPGs and should do well in sales.

Mike Dean

An exceptionally strange game of exploding children and their cheerfully homicidal babysitter in a really alien playpen.
GLOBBO!
BOOMPH!
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GLOBBO!

Steve Jackson Games are renowned for off-the-wall strange game ideas, but I think they've outdone themselves with **Globbo!**

The star of the game is Globbo himself (itself?), a semi-sentient, quasi-organic, polymorphous Playroom Assassination Device. He is armed with lasers, numerous hands and soothing music, all of which enable him to execute his charges — the children of Ticketa-too. These even stranger children are not only badly behaved, they explode as well!

The game is for two players, with one taking the part of Globbo and the other playing the children. The playing area is an A2 fold-out map of the nursery room, complete with black holes. These suck in children, and throw them out elsewhere.

The counters come as colour on card, and they represent the various elements of Globbo, who can grow, as well as elements of the children.

The problem with the children is that not only do they explode in fragments, causing damage and a mess; but these fragments can recombine to form another child who can then explode and so on... The catch comes when you realise that only half a child is needed to form a new one!! Globbo's player will soon be overwhelmed by children if he isn't careful.

The rules are fairly straightforward (if you can call a game like this straightforward) and the rulebook explains everything in clear detail, with lots of little pictures. The only unusual thing being that the rulebook is hand written — but this adds to the atmosphere!

It is difficult to rate Globbo! as a game; it is fun to play and the rules are extremely funny to read through, but will the humour last or will the game pall after a few plays? However, I don't think the game is designed for anything more than laughs, and it succeeds admirably in its aims. Buy it for entertainment, rather than serious play; it ranks alongside **The Awful Green Things** and **Snit's Revenge** as silly games. I just wonder what SJG is going to up with next!

Mike Lewis

MIDDLE EARTH ROLEPLAYING

The finest fantasy tale of all time must be Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings** trilogy. The detail, consistency, and poetry of the books is unmatched. An inescapable link exists between roleplayers and such a work of fiction — the feeling generated by the books is what we seek to recreate — and so it was inevitable that, eventually, the two should be brought together. When such an historic marriage takes place, however, it is important that the partners are well suited.

Iron Crown Enterprises' **Middle Earth Roleplaying** is this marriage; by its links with Tolkien, it cannot fail to attract many new gamers into this hobby; and I am reasonably confident that these newcomers will not be disappointed.

The MERP rulebook — all 104 pages of it — treats all the standard game mechanisms comprehensively; character generation, combat and so on. I can't admit to being overimpressed by the order of layout, however; it's fine to use, organised so as to be quick in play, but getting used to finding your way around the material is a nightmare! I ask you, is it right, is it fair, that Table 2 should precede Table 1? For a supposedly introductory game this had me utterly confused.

Let's assume we've waded through close to one hundred pages of rules, and now we want to know how closely this game will reproduce the atmosphere of the books. On one point, the game scores highly: source material. MERP is extremely well researched, as is shown by countless notes on linguistics, and I was very taken with the eleven pages of small type detailing the races that are most commonly encountered, from orcs to hobbits, variags to woses. A guide to the temperament and culture of the principle races of Middle Earth is bound to be conducive to good roleplaying.

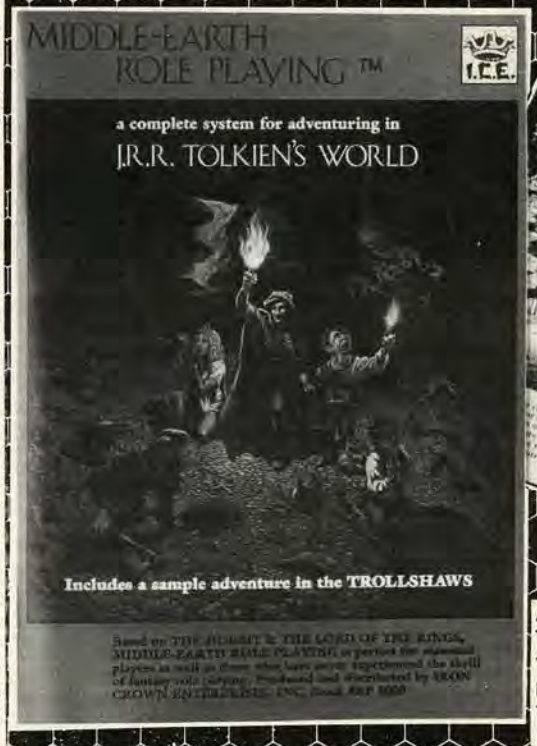
The other side of the coin is not so promising. While it would not be right for me to say that the rules broke any new ground, or were particularly well constructed, they are adequate. They yield combat result that are generally consistent with what one would expect — and thus act as an operative deterrent to hack-and-slay gaming. Where they fall down is in the mode of play. Rules are supposed to be hidden... In real life there are 'rules' — the laws of physics and chemistry and so on — which regulate our actions; but we tend not to be conscious of the rules governing it all. We act, and witness the results. And so it should be in role-playing. In Lord of the Rings, magic is a deeply mysterious phenomenon; yet in MERP the atmosphere is destroyed through the players' contact with the rules. The results of actions are faithfully recreated but the wonderment which surrounds the magic is lost. This is not a fault peculiar to MERP, however, and it is something a competent GM could overcome...

To complement their rules system, ICE have produced an impressive range of adventure modules. These are extremely attractively produced — with an average of four full colour pages of maps and diagrams, and stunning artwork. Here is the real strength of the game: using the extensive work of Professor Tolkien, the designers have produced supremely coherent and detailed modules. The information in each is so thorough and reasonable that it is probably useable without the rulebook — indeed, you might be better off converting your own favourite system for use with these modules.

Bree and the Barrow Downs is my favourite; the degree of characterisation in the descriptions of the inhabitants of Bree-land is heartening, and the Barrows themselves provide an interesting bit of adventure. I'd prefer, mind you, to be there when there were Bandits at the Autumn Fair. After all, who could resist a place where the fourth rule is that 'Baker's bread should be suited to a man's body.' Lots to do around Bree, and the whole thing is designed with role-playing, not combat, in mind.

Shelob's Lair and the Tower of Cirith Ungol is another excellent product. The city of Minas Ithil — later Minas Morgul — faces the formidable tower of Cirith Ungol. On one side of the river there is Civilisation, and the Tower of the Rising Moon; on the other, wilderness, and Mordor, Sauron's dark domain. As usual, there is all the detail one could wish for on land, climate, politics and power, and of course, Cirith Ungol.

Hillmen of the Trollshaws features Cameth Brin, a fortress built into a rocky outcrop, which protects a deserted town in its shadow. Explorations of Cameth Brin are obviously called for, and who could refuse the challenge?



Dagorlad and the Dead Marshes is the least spectacular of the modules, but will surely provide hours of role-playing and adventure.

The standard of all these products is one of excellence; they are worth every penny, and would yield hours of enjoyment.

Andy Blakeman

ADVENTURE 12

The Ancients are a long-dead alien race who ruled a large area of GDW's Imperium over 300,000 years ago. They have been hinted at in many **Traveller** publications; now, in **Secret of the Ancients**, the players solve their mystery.

The scenario, set in the Spinward Marches, is presented in the standard Traveller format, but departs from the game's general atmosphere: Traveller is a 'hard' science fiction game, and GDW go to great lengths to produce possible technology and socio-economic systems, making their universe realistic.

Ancients, however, presents the referee with way-out technology. The authors have attempted to rationalise the Ancient technology, and to an extent they succeed, but most of it is too high-powered to be of use to PCs.

Because of this, the scenario is rather overchoreographed. The effect is like a science fiction film dragging a group of bemused primitives along while giving them the treat of a special effects and light show, with stirring music overlaying the picture. The referee should be aware of this, or I believe that it could seriously disrupt the flow of the campaign.

In conclusion, the module gives good background material, but is unsuitable for a campaign whose base is political intrigue, industrial espionage, etc.

Steve Nutt

Aslan is the first alien module produced for **Traveller**. We have heard of the Aslan many times before, yet any previous information pales into insignificance when compared to this module.

The module divides into three parts. The first is the social background of the Aslan, aliens with a cultural background which is basically that of Japanese Samurai, though modified by the high-tech achieved by the Aslan. GDW have consistently attempted to produce believable aliens, and Aslan are close enough to humans for their use as PCs to be envisaged.

A distinctive quality of Aslan is that they group together in clans; it is rare to meet an Aslan who is not on clan business. So whereas in the Imperium characters start weak, high-ranking Aslan command immense power

STAR TREK: The Role-Playing Game

In the wake of the highly acclaimed **Star Trek** motion pictures comes the role-playing game. It comes in three boxed books, about A4 size, with two 10-sided dice. The books contain notes for referee, 'cadets', and the starfleet officer. This means that a lot of information is repeated, though the referee is given more detail. Overall, the system preserves much of the flavour of the original series.

The character generation system is rather clumsy; a lot of d10s are rolled before the captain steps onto the bridge, and character generation can take the best part of an hour. However, the system works, in that characters are competent in their assigned jobs. Before you start dicing, player and referee decide the postion of the PC on the ship — captain, science officer, etc. At first this worried my players, but they eventually got over it. Note that it is very important that the right person be chosen for the right job, because unlike many other role-playing games there is a definite structure of command.

The characters command a ship identical to the Enterprise of the TV series. As a result they begin the game with massive power at their disposal. The game, however, de-emphasizes this. The *Enterprise* becomes a huge taxi moving players from scenario to scenario. When they arrive, it serves as a library when they need detailed background information.

Because of this there is no proper space combat system, only an abstract stand-in, which will only frustrate all concerned. FASA produce a fine board game that one could use with the role-playing encounters with hostile vessels. Yet in the series, space combat often played a major role, and to leave out this essential facet of a SF role-playing game is, in my opinion, wrong.

The ground combat system is quite slow compared to missile firing. An average man can shoot several shots in the 10-second combat turn, and given the power of Star Trek weaponry (a phaser is one of the few guns in rpgs that can disintegrate a target) fire-fights should be kept to a minimum. It is advisable to give the players plenty of security men to catch those Klingon disruptor beams! This leaves players to fist fight in the traditional Star Trek manner.

Another problem with commanding the ship is the fact that 430 people crew it. A way to prevent players beaming down with a company of thugs is to have them run the entire bridge crew, even if this means them running two characters. The rest of the crew should only appear as the guest star experts of the TV series, specially designed to deal with the scenario. Playing two characters also allows individuals to be involved constantly, whereas they may otherwise be stuck on the bridge while the action goes on elsewhere.

The game places great emphasis on role-playing. If your group is hack and slash then they had better change their approach before they play Star Trek. After all, if you are Captain Kirk then you should act like him. The referee should also play the game in the spirit of Star Trek, with scenarios as wacky as you like. If the role-playing game is played like the film, then it is first class; if not, it could get rather bloodthirsty. It has to be pitched right.

Steve Nutt

STARSHIP DUEL 1

Starship Duel 1 is another Star Trek product from FASA. It must be emphasised that this game has nothing to do with FASA's **Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game**.

The game components are three combat wheels, one for each class of ship, and a card for each ship to record weapons armed, shields up, damage status, etc. For use with the cards are a lot of counters.

The Starship Duel comes in two halves. Firstly, a damaged *Enterprise* is pitted against K-22 *Bird of Prey*. This is the battle above the Genesis planet that Kirk wages with the Klingons in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. The second stage has a fully-powered Enterprise face a L-42 *Stronger Bird*, a far more powerful Klingon ship.

The system is novel and at first hard to grasp. Each combat wheel consists of three over-lapping circles with holes cut in them at various strategic points. The uppermost circle has a picture of your ship in the centre, with eight windows around it. The second circle has only one view port. The final circle has eight pictures of the enemy vessel. By revolving the wheels you change the heading of your ship in relation to the enemy.

In this way you can abstractly manoeuvre around each other, attempting to hit the enemy on an unprotected flank. The ships have power but of course everything cannot be powered at all times. Thus the game essentially involves trying to out-guess the enemy and hitting unshielded areas.

Despite its initial oddity, the game is easy to play. One great advantage is that there is no game board to speak of. If you Blu-tacked the counters to your control board you could easily play the game on a bus or train, for example. The game's major drawback is that it is very expensive for what you get.

Steve Nutt

ALIEN MODULES: ASLAN AND K'KREE

through the clan structure and as a result Aslan campaigns could be very high-powered.

The character generation system forms the second section. It covers most of the careers so far invented for humans, converting them to an Aslan background. If anything, however, Aslan come out rather over-skilled.

The third section is the scenario. It is massive, covering entire sectors. A general sector map of the Aslan Heirate is on the inside cover of the module. Initially players are humans hired in the Spinward Marches. They become entwined in a complex interclan battle. The scenario is open-ended, allowing for fist fights up to space battles with 100,000s of tons of ships.

All in all, this is a good buy. An Aslan-based campaign would be very different indeed.

The second module features the **K'Kree**, which as hexapodal herbivores are very alien indeed and as such difficult to use as PCs. In fact they are so alien that I wonder how they came to be the force they are in GDW's Universe. Due to their sheer bulk of the K'Kree, their staterooms on starships are massive; so much so that under High Guard a human-crewed ship would be far superior to a comparative K'Kree-ship.

Aside from this quibble, however, the background is well thought-out. It is a good idea to make this background available to the players if the K'Kree are used as PCs (though the race's peculiar habits make them unsuitable in many cases).

The character generation system is radically different: instead of individuals being generated, players design the entire family of a K'Kree, and these all go on adventure together. This places great stress on players controlling dozens of characters.

There seem to be other flaws in the system; for example military characters have a benefit table, yet I can see no way how they can make the desired die roll to get onto it. In addition there are many typos.

The final section consists of three excellent scenarios. They approach K'Kree from all angles, players being humans for or against K'Kree, or K'Kree themselves.

This module is a good way to expand your knowledge of the Traveller universe, and this alone will probably sell it, in spite of the shortcomings.

Steve Nutt

CHAIN MAIL by Brian Creese

A bi-monthly feature about the postal gaming hobby

SOPWITH

There you are, pootling along in your Fokker, when you see an enemy plane ahead of you. Immediately you take chase, swooping in behind him for the kill. But your victim is not letting you have it all your own way; first he swoops to the right, then... to the right again, and after you went left... where is he now?? Aaarrgghhh, on your own tail and firing...

Sopwith, as the name suggests, is a World War One flying game; each player is a pilot and the aim is the extremely simple and reasonable one of knocking every other player out of the sky. Each plane has an amount of damage it can take and a number of bullets with which to inflict damage on the opposition. There are a few highly troublesome clouds and that is about it.

Sopwith is, in many ways, an ideal game. Its rules are simple, and indeed the whole idea is very straightforward, and yet the resulting game is fiendishly difficult. There is also scope for many different styles of play, and, as many hundreds of postal players all over the country are now finding out, it is possible to play with the minimum of equipment.

The game is played on a hexagonal board made up of — yes, hexes. On each corner of this board is an airfield which represents a player's home base, and he may return there during the game to take on new supplies of bullets.

Each turn consists of three segments, and in each segment you may move and/or fire. Movement is wonderfully simple. You can fly straight ahead, turn left or right, or do a manoeuvre known as Left Slip or Right Slip, keeping the plane pointing in the same direction while moving to the hex on the appropriate side. When firing bullets at other planes you can aim ahead, left or right. The amount of damage done depends on how close you are to the damaged plane. After the initial segment there is also the option of not moving. You can fire a maximum of three bullets in one entire turn.

Clouds, as all WW1 pilots know, were very irritating for early flyers. In Sopwith they diminish the effects of bullets and they even damage planes that fly into them. Clouds are definitely to be avoided, which can be tricky as they move randomly every turn!

As I said, very simple and yet... If you remember the position I started with, being on the tail of another plane, and now imagine the number of different ways each plane can move and fire during the three segments of that turn, you will begin to see the beauty of this game.

One of the rules of Sopwith is that players' moves are revealed simultaneously, and if you have been reading this column regularly, a light should flash in your head, for simultaneous movement is ideal for postal play. In fact, **Postal Sopwith** is a relatively new development. It was really pioneered by Tom Tweedy who launched his zine **DibDibDib** initially as a place in which to play postal Sopwith. It was so popular that many other editors took up the idea and today it is one of the most widely played of all games.

By post it is an undemanding game. There is no pressure of time forcing you to make decisions, and you can analyse the various possible moves at your leisure. You also have ample opportunity to talk to other players, convincing them that others are the main threat in the game. And yet, the possibilities for movement are so varied that it can be almost worse having so much time. The gifted player seems inevitably to know where you are going, and to be always on your tail!

Despite the undeniable joys of blasting another player out of the sky, the postal game has introducd significant changes in an attempt to improve the overall enjoyment of playing the game. This is done largely through a rating system. This system discourages the excellent tactic of flying round in circles hoping to be unnoticed while everyone else tears into each other. For ratings purposes, the more damage you do to another plane the better, and there are bonuses for being the one to actually effect a 'kill'. When you have amassed enough points, you become an 'ace'. This has advantages above the obvious ego boost, as aces do more damage in combat, and can perform the amazing *Immelmann turn*, a devastating manoeuvre which normal players cannot manage. So, if you want to play a couple of games of postal Sopwith, you need to keep your rating in mind.

Sopwith was originally published by Gametime Games, a company which has, I believe, gone out of business. The rights are now understood to be with Avalon Hill, who have no plans to re-release the game. This non-availability of the game, however, has not proved a problem for dedicated games-players. In fact about 90% of today's postal players simply have a set of rules from the GM, and a photocopied representation of the board. It seems slightly astonishing, nevertheless, that a game whose popularity has increased dramatically over the past few years should have been unavailable during all that time.

20 Years On, from Mark Billenness, 20 Winifred Road, Coulson, Surrey, lists all postal games zines and will tell you which zines offer postal Sopwith. Available for 35p an issue.

Brian Creese

Fantasy Media

*Colin Greenland, author of **Daybreak on a Different Mountain** and co-editor of SF magazine **Interzone**, reviews the latest additions to the fantasy/SF media.*

One day Alex Rogan (Lance Guest) is a restless teenager fed-up with living on a caravan site and prone to take out his frustration on a *Starfighter* video game. The next he's won himself a place light-years away holding the final frontier against the might of Xur and the Ko-Dan Armada, with only a 'gung-ho iguana' called Grig (Dan O'Herlihy) for company. 'I've always wanted to fight a desperate battle against incredible odds!' yips Grig. Alex is not so sure he wants to exchange the safety of the video screen for the perils of deep space until he realises his destiny and his duty, as **THE LAST STARFIGHTER** (Heron, PG).

In fact Alex needn't have worried. Apart from a mildly amusing little sub-plot with the android replica left on Earth to conceal his absence, Alex's adventure is strictly the movie of the video game: simple as can be, and pitched at a pre-teen audience who can believe Alex and Grig blasting a hundred alien ships and escaping without a scratch. Appropriately enough, the film sees the introduction of Digital Scene Simulation SM, replacing the conventional modelling of space action with computer graphics. It's tolerable, except in close-up, where things tend to go flat and flimsy. But with ever-higher resolution, this is no doubt the way forward for cinema animation.

They came in search of Paradise. Actually, they came in search of breadfruit, cheap fodder for the plantation workers of Jamaica. They came, in 1788, to Tahiti, where the breadfruit grows; but it took longer to grow that many breadfruit plants than Lt William Bligh had estimated. After nearly six months of lazing in the sun with a crowd of half-naked Tahitian women, Bligh's crew didn't enjoy returning to the cramped quarters, rotten food, backbreaking toil and grim discipline of their little ship. And when Bligh insisted on a second crack at rounding Cape Horn, which had nearly killed them all once already, they said *no*. **THE BOUNTY** (Thorn EMI, 15) is a strong and sombre film. Anthony Hopkins is a brilliantly manic Bligh, a monster you can understand. Ship's master Fletcher Christian (Mel Gibson) attends him in sullen silence until he can't take it any more. By concentrating on the deadlock of the characters and the inevitable explosion, director Roger Donaldson has left many things unexamined: the Tahitians are not allowed to be much more than stereotype happy savages, for example. But his film is a powerful vision of the hell — and the wild beauty — of the high seas.

When **Dune** was first published in 1965, thousands of readers were captivated by Frank Herbert's invented world of sandworms and subterfuge, and impressed by the extraordinary interlocking complexity of its design. Now, four sequels later, the Dune Chronicles amount to a staggering 1,700 pages, covering a 6,000-year slice of the epoch of the Spacing Guild and reaching some 30,000 years into the future. Led by a Californian English professor, 42 dedicated scholars have digested it all and produced 'the complete, authorized guide and companion', **THE DUNE ENCYCLOPEDIA** (Corgi £5.95), choc-a-bloc with facts, inferences and references, 'so that readers on worlds from one end of the galaxy to another may finally have a clear, coherent picture of the legendary days of Paul Muad'Dib and his son Leto Atreides, known during his 3,500-year lifetime as the God Emperor. Entries range from Fremen Wind-Etching to the wars of assassins, from the Bene Gesserit (27 pages) to Duncan Idaho (separate entries for each of 20 incarnations).

Unlike existing reader's guides to the worlds of Tolkien and others, The Dune Encyclopedia is itself a work of fiction, rich in imaginary footnotes and learned sources, and 'newly discovered information'. Herbert himself is (of course) delighted, but promises 'Issues still to be explored as the Chronicles unfold'. Where will it end?

It's curious to turn from these vast enterprises to **THE GODMAKERS** (NEL, £1.95), a minor novel of Herbert's, yet fired with the same megalomaniac vision, as the title alone indicates. Lewis Orne is a distinctly unpleasant person, part Sherlock Holmes, part John Wayne, who starts off in the humdrum, everyday job of deciding which 'rediscovered planets' deserve invasion by peacekeeping forces, and works his way up to godhead: 'the man who walks from planet to planet'. For all his ever-expanding cosmic perspective, Herbert still writes characters who look and sound as if they'd been cut off the backs of cornflake packets.

Colin Greenland

WITH OVER 70 MEMBERS, WE MUST BE DOING SOME-

Paul Barnetson, Secretary of the Ringwraiths of Chichester, tells the secret of running a successful FRP Club

'5 regular players, more members desperately needed' said a recent personal advert in an frp magazine. And this seems to be the case with many clubs; they have a nucleus of experienced members, but frequently need more.

Yet, with no trouble at all, and virtually no advertising, we have grown to a membership of over 70, and a regular weekly attendance of between 40 and 50. How did we get here? Perhaps a brief history of our club, together with its achievements and its problems would be of interest and use to others.

HISTORY, The Initial Interest

Ever since I was first introduced to **Lord of the Rings** at university over 20 years ago, I have been a fanatical follower of Middle Earth and its own peculiar branches of natural history and other lore. I've also liked games. And so, when I happened to trip over a copy of the now-defunct **Battle** magazine in my newsagents in the late 70s, a copy which was devoted to the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** game, I thought that this was for me!

I started by joining my local Wargames Club. Unfortunately this consisted mainly of earnest young men refighting the classic battles of history and arguing for hours over whether this particular musket would fire in this sort of way in this particular environment. Not for me! I was after the magic and fantasy of questing in Middle Earth. However, the club did contain two young men who were interested in D&D, and it was there I played my first game. The wargames environment not really being ideal for fun and fantasy, I invited the two young men back to my home on Friday evenings to play D&D at our leisure, and for longer periods. Thus, with the three of us gathered round our dining room table, was our club born.

HISTORY, The Dining Room Stage

My two sons, then aged 6 and 9, soon wanted to join in. We were then playing from 7 to 10.30pm on Fridays, and perhaps part of the attraction was that Mum allowed them to stay up late to play! As it happened, they took to the game like ducklings to water, and loved every minute of it.

Two interesting and unexpected advantages of their participation emerged at this point. The older boy, who was an active Cub Scout, gained his Hobbies badge with D&D. Although the Scouts keep no records of badge subjects, they think he may have been the first in the country to do so. Meanwhile the younger boy, who was still learning to read and spell at this stage, was soon working through the **Players Handbook**, and spelling words like *charisma* and *constitution* with no trouble at all!

Our nascent club now had five members, and was going strong. Soon a colleague from my office expressed an interest, and also brought his son along; that made seven. His son brought two of his friends along; nine had now gathered! We were now alternating between my colleague's dining room table and my own every Friday evening, and playing D&D to the accompaniment of candle light, spooky music on the tape recorder, and other suitable environmental effects. At this stage we also tried playing for a complete day; we tried other games such as **Traveller** and **RuneQuest** and — most important of all — we formalised ourselves into a proper club. As we were nine in number, the **Ringwraiths of Chicester** came into existence.

HISTORY, The Expansion Stage

Soon, other neighbours, sons' school friends, etc, were clamouring to join. Nine is about the maximum anybody can get round my dining room table, so after a discussion with the club we took our big decision. We would hire a room in the local community centre every Friday evening for the next month, invite everybody who had shown an interest, and see at the end of the month whether it had been worthwhile. Of course, we would have to start paying! The smallest room in the local community centre cost £4.50 for the evening; we anticipated that we might, if we were lucky, get 15 people along, and so we arbitrarily set the weekly tax at 30p.

At our first meeting, we were buried in applicants to become members! And since that date, some two years ago, we haven't looked back. We have twice increased the size of the space we use, and we now hire a complete floor of the community centre every Friday evening. Indeed, it sometimes seems that we have taken over the entire centre! With a membership of over 70 and over £150 in a Building Society account, we have recently lowered our taxes to 20p a night.

WEEK TO WEEK OPERATION

How do we operate? We realised very quickly that we needed a democratically elected committee, and every October we solemnly hold our AGM (much to the annoyance of some younger members who think it wastes playing time!), to elect the following year's committee and discuss other club matters. Our original committee gave themselves 'committee character names' to liven up the meetings, and we still use them occasionally. Currently, our committee consists of the following (the fact that there are nine of them, like the original Ringwraiths, is no coincidence).

1. Chairman, to represent the club to outside groups. This post is held by one of our few female members who, when she isn't playing a rather nasty female dwarven fighter, works in the local youth office, and thus has useful contacts.

2. Secretary, to keep minutes of meetings, and to do any correspondence necessary. Currently, that's yours truly.

3. Treasurer, a responsible post. The treasurer collects the *20ps* every Friday, maintains the Building Society account, and pays for the rental of the rooms we hire. This task is efficiently done by a high school boy.

4. Games Master, responsible for the games we play. He helps new members find a campaign, arranges for training where necessary, and is the ultimate authority on the games. We are lucky that one of our older members takes this job seriously. More below on this subject.

5. Membership Secretary, who issues membership cards. Once again, a job that needs to be handled responsibly (as these cards are important, see below), and once again we are lucky to have a reliable younger member in the post.

6. Newsletter Editor. Some years ago we carried out a survey of club members to find out what improvements were necessary, and we found that a gap had opened between them and the committee. A regular newsletter is our attempt to fill this gap, so it contains news and other items that the committee want disseminated, and any other items that club members want published. It is distributed approximately once a month at club meetings.

7. Younger Members' Representative. This member is usually aged 14 or less, and is responsible for ensuring that the younger club members' views are taken into account at committee meetings.

8. Public Relations/Librarian. Originally the PR officer was going to be responsible for membership campaigns, but we haven't needed any! As a result the job turned into something of a sinecure, so we merged it with the Librarian. Although members normally provide their own games kit, occasionally an old PH, MM or DMG is declared surplus to requirements, and the Librarian holds these to lend to newer players who haven't yet built up their collection of games kit. He also has a taped version of the BBC's successful version of Lord of the Rings, for members to borrow.

9. Community Centre Relations. Somebody has to make sure we clean up after ourselves, return the tables we've borrowed to the rooms they came from, look after the centre key we've been lent, and generally make sure we 'keep our noses clean'. We don't want to lose our weekly bookings in an ideal location. Not so glamorous a job, but absolutely essential.

PROBLEMS

Readers will be interested to hear about some of the problems we've come up against. Perhaps this will help them avoid them, and if they can think of a better solution, let us know!

A. Controlling the games. Originally we had detailed plans about mixing all age groups in each campaign, moving characters who had been killed in one campaign to another, moving players up through campaigns of increasing difficulty, holding training courses for players and DMs, etc. It didn't work! We find that in practice, members aggregate into (normally age-) groups to play their games, and happily re-create when they get killed. There is little movement between groups, but if that's what people want (and the survey suggested that they did) then that's fine. After all, we're all there to enjoy ourselves, not to be told we have to play a particular character in a particular campaign. And so our games master nowadays just keeps an eye on campaigns generally, helps new members, allocates players to campaigns when requested, tries (with some success) to persuade players to have a go at DMing, and occasionally organises some campaign such as Viking Raid for everybody to join in.

The committee aren't entirely happy with this yet, but the members keep coming back!

B. Training. This is connected with the above idea. Our original grandiose plans to train players and DMs alike have now fallen by the wayside, but it's still discussed occasionally at committee meetings.

C. The Accident. It's bound to happen to every club eventually, so be warned. One of our members threw a drink can to another member and accidentally cut him in the face. He nearly lost an eye! Luckily he didn't, and the matter was closed, but we are now insured. Not only for members hurting each other, but also for hurting members of the public, or the centre furniture. Get some insurance!

D. What age groups should we cater for? This caused a lot of discussion at early committee meetings, and we tried to restrict

THING RIGHT!

our members to over 14s. It didn't work! The under 14s came along in droves, clamouring to join, and we didn't have the heart to turn them away. Anyway, as one of them pointed out, their money was as good as anyone else's! We now have no restrictions on age.

The age of members spreads from under 10 to well over 40, with the majority being high school boys between 11 and 18, and several members in their early 20s.

One problem of having so many younger members is that we have to moan at them sometimes, asking them to respect the other users of the centre, not to all troop out to the local fish and chip shop together, and generally to keep quiet. It usually works!

E. What games should we allow? Originally some members wanted to take time off to play table tennis (we use the youth club's premises). This, we stopped. The committee decided we are an frp club, not a youth club, and only frp games would be allowed. We now play **D&D, Runequest, Traveller, Aftermath, Call of Cthulhu, Champions**, to name only a few. Board games such as **Judge Dredd, Car Wars**, etc, are also popular.

SUCCESSES

And we also had our successes:

a. The size of our membership roll, combined with the number who return week after week, is probably our greatest success. And all this without any advertising!

b. After members have attended for approximately two months, they get a membership card. We have negotiated with the local supplier of frp equipment to give our members 10% off on production of their RINGWRAITHS membership card, and we are currently negotiating with other suppliers for similar agreements.

c. Occasionally we hire a coach to go up to Games Day, or off to that castle in Cheshire for real life dungeoneering, or other destinations.

FUTURE

What of the future? Several ideas are being bandied about around our committee meetings, such as an Open Day where we open up one Friday evening or Saturday afternoon and deliberately play display or participation dungeons. Then families can come along and find out what little Johnny really gets up to....

Another idea is a day out in the local country. We could organise our own real life D&D, as a cross between 'Killer' and a Scout wide game, finishing the day with a party.

We're also planning a get together with the local war games club, so we can find out what the other members get up to in their meetings. And we hope to be able to arrange some competitive games with other nearby frp clubs.

The RINGWRAITHS are certainly going places!

But the most important future event is an award that we will be giving out. Our chairman recently left us temporarily in order to increase the population by one. Our newest member (nicknamed 'Wee-Wee The Brownie' by some) saw the light of day for the first time last year, and the chairman will be bringing her along to introduce her to the RINGWRAITHS shortly. Naturally, we're going to award her a soft fluffy toy. What sort of toy? A dragon, of course!

Paul Barnetson, alias Sauron, Dark Lord of the Ringwraiths of Chichester

GAME COMPANY *Club Special*

This issue and next, we bring you a full listing of the clubs advertised so far in the Game Company column. Here, A-M by area (loosely), next month N-Z. If your club doesn't appear, or you can't find one to join in your area, write to this page. Please tell us if the information is wrong, too! Individuals looking for other gamers are listed in the Classifieds on p24.

BANBURY: Castle Fantasy & Wargames Society meets every other Monday at 7pm at the Elephant & Castle, Banbury. Ring 'Troll' (Andy Johnson) on Banbury 50430 for details — if you have a strong nerve! Membership £2 a year.

BANGOR: University College of N Wales Wargames and Role-playing Games Club meets every Friday and Saturday during term in members rooms. 'We play *anything*'. Contact the Secretary, Students' Union, Deiniol Rd, Bangor.

BARRY RPG Club play **Aftermath, Cthulhu, DragonQuest, Daredevils, Bushido, Space Opera** and wargames. Anyone interested, male or female, ring John or Sandy on Barry 746138.

BLACKBURN: The Phantasmal Forces Fantasy Group meets every Thursday at 7.30pm in the NALGO club, 20 Lord St West. Contact G Pearson, 0254 665898 for details.

BLACKPOOL: Cleveleys Games Club meets every Wednesday at 7.30pm at the Darleigh Hotel, 16 Clegg Avenue, Cleveleys. They play D&D and AD&D games among others. Contact Kevin Cropper: 0253 855511.

BRISTOL: Contact John Nash, 84 Henleaze Rd, Henleaze, Bristol BS9 4JY for details of a fantasy/SF games club that meets at players' houses weekly, with a hall available for bigger events.

BRIDGNORTH: 'Black Chasm role-playing club meets occasionally to play such games as **AD&D, Traveller**. Those who wish to join should contact Glyn Simpson, 3 Pool Drive, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 5DL. Must be able to travel to Bridgnorth.'

CHELMSFORD: an rpg club whose members concentrate on 'character interaction' and role-playing are looking for new adventurers aged 15+. They play the **AD&D** game on Sunday afternoons at players' homes. They are willing to play different games. Contact N Shorter, 34 Aubrey Close, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 4EJ. Tel: 440342

The Ringwraiths of CHICHESTER meet at the Fernleigh Centre, North St, every Friday from 7 - 10.30 pm, to play any frp game including **D&D, RQ, C&S, Champions, Cthulhu**, etc. Contact Secretary Paul Barnetson (Chichester 527898) for details.

CONGLETON: Chaos Tribe Fantasy meet at members' homes to play **AD&D, RQ** and 'any game that comes along'. New players, including females(!), welcome. Jeremy Nuttall, Congleton 4370.

DAGENHAM/ BARKING: The Adventurers of Berecingum meet every Thursday at 7.30pm to play **D&D** or **AD&D** games. Membership is from £4 a year or 50p a night. Any person interested in playing rpgs should contact Pete on 01-591 3546.

South East ESSEX Military Society (SEEMS) meets on Wednesdays and Fridays 7-10pm at Rocheway Community Centre, Rochford, Essex. Roleplaying, boardgames, **Warhammer** and traditional wargames. Contact Richard Stokes, 159 Stambridge Rd, Rochford, Essex. Tel Southend on Sea 546166.

EXETER: New this month: **The Club With No Name** seeks a name and new members of all ages. 'We meet to play boardgames and rpgs of all types once weekly (though the actual day varies) at Bart's Tavern, Bartholomew Street West, Exeter.' Contact Tony Lock: Exeter 214128/ Mamhead 674.

EXETER UNIVERSITY Gaming Club meets on Sundays (term-time only), 2-11pm in Cornwall House, Exeter University.

EAST GRINSTEAD: 'Anyone above age 10 welcome, female members especially wanted' at an rpg club which meets at Neale House, Moat Rd on Sundays from 2 to 5.30pm, to play whatever games people bring along, especially **RuneQuest, Call of Cthulhu, Car Wars, Striker, D&D**. Details from Rick, East Grinstead 25377, or Phil, Copthorne 714825.

FOLKSTONE: The Hack and Slay Society meets every Sunday 2-5pm to play **AD&D, Runequest, Traveller** and **Warhammer**. Write to Mr A Coombs, 78 Holland Avenue, Folkstone, Kent.

GOOLE Roleplayers ' — yes, there is intelligent role-playing life in Goole. We play **AD&D, RQ, Star Frontiers, Traveller, Star Fleet Battles, Battlecars** and other games. The group meets at least twice a week. New members welcome, experience unnecessary. Why run from kobolds when you can slay giants with us? David Benton, Tel 0405 5029.'

GOSPORT Wargaming Club meets Friday evenings, Saturdays and other times to play **D&D** and **Traveller** games. Contact David Burgess, 3 Beech Grove, Alverstoke, Gosport, Hants PO12 2EJ.

HIGH WYCOMBE Wargames Club tell us that they now meet at Bassetsbury Manor on Thursdays, 7-10pm. The first visit is free, but please phone Steve Easton on Bourne End 22831 to say you are going.

HINDHEAD: The Adulterated Sanity Roleplaying Gamers say they meet fortnightly on Sundays. Rowan Wilson, 7 Rozeldene, Hindhead, Surrey.

HORSHAM: Write to Andy Norman for details of a club in this area which meets at players' houses weekly to play **D&D, T&T, C&S, Dragonquest** and **Traveller** games. The group mainly consists of A-level students or undergrads. Players 18+ welcomed to write to 1 Reapers Close, Wimblehurst Park, Horsham, W Sussex.

North LIVERPOOL RPG Club require referees and players for their group. They play any system you care to take along, particularly lesser known ones. Novices, veterans and youngsters all welcome; experienced referees to teach the above games required. Dave Perry, 141 Bedford Rd, Walton L4 5PT or Tony Smith, 233 Fernhill Rd, Bootle 20, L20 0AQ; or just go along to the Rice Lane Community Centre on Mon, Tues or Thurs at 6-10pm, Sat 1-5pm.

East LONDON: Freedom Warriors are a group of people aged 15+ in Woodford Green, Chingford, who want to meet new role-playing gamers. No details here on what they play or how often — why not ring and ask? Tel: 01-527 7176 (evenings only).

East LONDON: Death Dealers is an rpg society for people aged 18+. All rpgs played, with 'a violent **AD&D** campaign' which started last year. SAE to Wayne, 59 Kiln Court, Newell St, Poplar, London E14.

South East LONDON: Deptford Adult Games Group meets at the Community Centre, Idonia St, at 3pm on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of every month. Fancy a game of **Creature Castle**, or **Wooden Ships and Iron Men**? Contact the chairman, Kendall Johns.

West LONDON: Shadow Warriors Gaming Society meets every Saturday 12-6pm at the Hand & Flower Hotel (1st floor), 1 Hammersmith Rd, Olympia, London W14, to play **AD&D, Traveller, Runequest, Call of Cthulhu, Champions, Car Wars, Superworld, Aftermath**, etc. You are advised to turn up early taking any necessary equipment.

LOUGHBOROUGH: Mad Butchers of the Flatulent Wyvern Society is the name David Webster has given his new club, which meets on Sundays to play an **AD&D** campaign. Players aged 14+ ('*no* munchkins') welcome. 455 Loughborough Rd, Birstall, Leics.

MAIDSTONE: The landlord of the Rose & Crown, High St, West Malling, his wife, three cats and someone called Ken Hay are said to run a face-to-face **Diplomacy** campaign, plus **D&D** games in the pub! It sells real ale too.

Letters

So it's 1985, and life goes on.... I never believed old George knew what he was talking about. Of course, I am writing this in November.... so he has still got a month or two left.... but you're reading this in January 1985, right? You are reading it, aren't you? I mean, these aren't the last few words that humanity will ever scrawl are they? What a frightening thought. Well, if there is anybody out there, drop a line to: ***IMAGINE*** *magazine (letters), The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD, and we'll meet up and have a game of* **Aftermath** *or two.*

Right, let's start of the New Year with a little of our usual reverence.

Dave Tant, Bexleyheath: I can only suppose issue 20 was devoted to Clerics as a gesture of gratitude by 'The Publisher'. Looking at the series of pictures of his gaunt features looming above a DM screen, it is obvious he has recently been the recipient of a **raise dead** spell!

There has been an awesome silence from the foreboding High Tower wherein the great mage dwells.... one wonders what he's up to. Maybe the rest of you had better pretend you didn't read that little whimsy on the ***Turnbull Talking*** *page in #20, and we'll change the subject altogether.*

Andy Kent, Sheffield: In the **Clerics are People Too** article in #20, Paul Vernon seems to put forward the opinion that magic is a 'cowardly', 'beyond the pale', 'dishonourable' method of combat. Surely, magic wasn't discovered the day before yesterday — it has been a part and parcel of everyday life for thousands of years! It would be a little silly if all through history, while empires rose and fell, nobody used magic in battle. Indeed, the army which marches off to war without powerful magic is not only asking for defeat — it's living in the Stone Age!

As for his suggestions about clerics of Kos, I'd be very surprised if there were any left alive by now. If they insist on leaping in to fight everything in sight, they'd either be hunted down by the survivors of the villages they'd incited the local orcs to attack, or they'd be cut down, back-stabbed and fireballed by the fighters, thieves and MUs they refused to cure.

David Webster, Queriborough, Leics: It was nice to see one of my favourite classes (second only to druids) covered in such detail. The party I DM used to have just one cleric, fighting and curing, but he has realised recently that his spells give him a 'strategic' advantage, and so he has been trying to bend the rest of the party to his will. I find that inter-party differences can enhance a campaign or ruin it.

Steve Knowles, Holbeach, Lincs: I was disgusted to read the opinion that "clerics should not be found immersing themselves in the delights of the bordello or ale-house — unless religious observance demands it". My 4th level cleric often enjoys a pint, and when the rest of the party started with fresh characters, it was yours truly who smashed open doors, killed orcs, and generally saved the party.

As God Is My Witness was excellent. The ordeals were ace; keep up the good work.

Most of you found plenty of material to chew on in the clerics issue. Trying to adopt an individual posture for your cleric is all very well, but if you decide that your cleric isn't going to cast cures on anyone who won't worship the green flower god, you'd best introduce the idea gradually. Conversion to a more definitive religious code shouldn't be announced to the other players just at the time the fighters are crawling away from the battle with the lesser-spotted nasty....

Another idea introduced recently was the ***Soapbox*** *column, designed to bring a little of the controversy and opinion of the amateur press to* ***IMAGINE*** *magazine. Graham Staplehurst got the ball rolling by drawing parallels between gaming practice and the dichotomy of art/competitive endeavour found elsewhere. This seemed to strike a chord with several readers:*

David Webster: Soapbox is a good idea. Graham Staplehurst echoed some of my own feelings.

R G Winterbottom, Littleborough, Lancs: In **Soapbox**, Graham Staplehurst complains that too much emphasis is placed on the games system in a role-playing game. For me, the system is the most important part, with 'role-playing' as an added bonus if it is done well. If the game was just pure role-playing, no satisfaction would be gained from playing.

Compare ice-skating with ice-dance. Both require skill, but ice-dancing is enjoyable to watch for most people, while ice-skating is best appreciated by those with some knowledge of it. Ice-dance is an art form; aesthetically pleasing to the eye (even though competitive); ice-skating is just a skill (also competitive). In a game, if the role-playing was done well and the gaming badly, the players would give up; they wouldn't be getting anywhere. The point of the game would be lost. Role-playing games were an original idea, as was painting, as was music, but people try to be better than other people at these things, thus making them competitive.

So it's not the fault of the game, but of human nature, eh? We've been brought up for too long on the notion that a game means having to beat someone; players, the computer.... In rpgs, much has been said of trying to beat the referee, but there is also the problem of players trying to beat the system. Get the xps, exploit the weaknesses in the system; these attitudes are what go against the notion of 'art', not the products themselves. At least, D&D, by its originality and its popularity has done more to change the face of 'play', if nothing else.

And anyway, I hate ice-dancing....

Roger A Wright, Welling, Kent: In your letters page, was the placing of Essex CCC before West Ham United meant as a snub to footballers or football fans?

Determined to take offence, aren't you? They weren't in any order particularly, but seeing as Essex are County Champions, I suppose you could argue precedence that way. You're just the sort of fellow whose first question about a campaign world like Pelinore would be 'what's the name of the biggest building society?'

Steve Knowles: Pelinore is great. It's ace having something for both Expert and Advanced players.

Thomas Cook, Kirkby Malham, N Yorks: I've been collecting Pelinore, and have just noticed that Millipy Burwright (**10b**) is an estranged cousin of Framo (**14j**) — but 12, 13 and 14 have never appeared.

Roger Wright: What are property prices like in Pelinore? — and what is the name of the building

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society handling such properties? My club would be interested in moving there at a later date.

What did I tell you? The simple answer, Roger, is that prices vary horrendously. In somewhere like the New City, or the Communities, a 10 year lease on an apartment or room in a run-down building costs about 4000gp. Buying the freehold on a modest town house off the Broadway on the other hand is a much more costly affair. If you haven't got the cash available for the house of your dreams, then some tough bargaining at a finance house should get you a loan; but the interest rates are something else....

As for the 'missing' numbers, those were allocated at the time of going to press to other locations in the City, which have not yet seen the light of day. You may have seen that Deorantannis, a Redemptor at the Court of Ten Thousand Ravens, was given the number 50a. This is just a cross-referencing system, and does not always imply that we will get around to publishing the relevant building.

Now, a heavily edited version of a huge letter; my apologies to David for the hack.

David Marley, Siteness, Lincs: Roger Musson put forward Moorcock's idea of Chaos, but it seems to me to be an over-simplified concept.

Chaos is the natural state of everything that exists. Newton said that every action has an equal, opposite reaction, so how can we attempt a rational explanation for the creation itself? The universe sprung from Chaos. It could come from nowhere else.

The Law of Chaos is that nothing is true, everything is permitted. From this we see that every time magic is used, the MU is employing the use of Chaotic forces — magic is the changing of reality. Further, no character who is truly Chaotic could be considered 'Good' or 'Evil', since everything is possible.

The alignment argument just isn't going to lie down, is it? Let's try to tackle this subject one part at a time over the next few letter pages, shall we, starting with the question, what is the source (alignment) of magic?

We'll let Roger have the last word, since I've been rude enough to him already.

Roger Wright: I read, with interest, Alan Heavan's inspired article **Role-Playing For Remedials**. I am a teacher at a large comprehensive school, and run a D&D club at a Youth Centre. I have noted, and informed others at school that boys with an apparently low reading ability and a reluctance to read in class would tackle the often difficult language of their games systems without a second thought.

Letters

I was invited on a camping holiday specifically to run D&D in the event of rain stopping play. It happened to be a wet week, but the D&D was so successful that it was difficult to prise the kids out of their tents when the sun did shine.

Upon our return, we organised a 'Life Skills' course for pupils not entered for any (or many) examinations, to run from the February of their 5th year until they left. D&D was to feature prominently in this course. Unfortunately, I was not free to participate at the available times, and it never really took off. Role-playing activities were, however, included in the programme, and it is possible that D&D will appear in the future. D&D on the school time-table may therefore be nearer than you think, and possibly some schools have already tried it. I, for one, would be interested to hear if they have. I will certainly make this article available to our remedial department for possible inclusion in a programme of work lower down the school.

Let's hear it if your school has used D&D in this way – it would make a change from the stupid image engendered by rubbish like that ***Monsters & Mazes*** *TV film. Blimey, for news like that, I'd even forgive Roger if it turned out he was a Kent supporter.*

Letters edited by Paul Cockburn

VOP

by Ian Gibbs

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Parlez-vous Shedu? You must have come across characters who can converse freely in Bronze Dragon. How fine a splitting of tongues do you need?

A page for the not-so-experienced adventurer

by Roger Musson

One aspect of D&D® campaigns which often seems to get scant attention is that of language; yet language is a matter of some importance in everyday life, and can be equally so in the context of a fantasy role-playing campaign. There are four things to consider about language when setting up a campaign: the languages spoken by humans, the languages of monsters, the structures of language, and alignment languages.

Humanity in the D&D game tends to speak what is conveniently referred to as 'Common' — a term taken, I believe, from the Elric novels of Michael Moorcock. Doubtless it is convenient for players if everyone they meet, wheresoever they go, speaks the same language. However, few DMs are going to schedule things with just the convenience of the players in mind. In this world, though English is rapidly becoming a 'Common' language thanks to geo-political and technological reasons, language remains something that is very much divided up by area.

There is no reason why this should not also be the case in a D&D game. At an early stage in your planning, you should make a map showing not only the immediate area in which you expect most play to occur, but also of the whole kingdom/empire/whatever and the states that surround it. It is quite possible, if not likely, that neighbouring states will have their own languages. Players may encounter these languages either when parties of foreign NPCs come their way (jabbering to one another in their own tongue, much to the mistrust of the uncomprehending player-characters) or when they themselves go travelling, in which case they will be faced with the problems of getting by in a foreign land — just to make things that little bit harder.

Locals may give what are obviously anxious warnings; since the players know they are being warned, but cannot understand what they are being warned about, they may become nervous.... Alternatively, should player-characters learn the lingo, and should foreign NPCs talk freely in their own tongue thinking that the characters are unable to understand it, an interesting coup might be in the offing.

Parlez-vous Shedu? Though in most D&D campaigns I feel there are too few human languages, in others I feel there are far too many inhuman ones. I have certainly come across player-characters who allege they can converse freely in Bronze Dragon and all sorts of other obscure tongues.

Just as it is worthwhile to decide at an early stage how many foreign tongues will come into your campaign, it is also useful to decide what inhuman tongues are spoken by monsters. It is not necessary to have every intelligent monster speaking its own tongue. In any one area, a handful of languages may displace the more obscure ones, just as in these islands English has wiped out Manx and Cornish, and is in the last throes of eliminating Gaelic and Irish. I can conceive that Ogres, Goblins, Gnolls, Bugbears and a few others might end up speaking dialects of Orcish, or all Dragons might speak comprehensible versions of the same Dragonish tongue; that Sprites, Leprechauns, Pixies, Nixies, Sylphs and Dryads might be found to speak recognisable forms of Elvish and so on. It is up to the DM to decide how fine a splitting of tongues is going to be useful to your campaign.

With regard to languages themselves, it is worth remembering how, for instance, **Lord of the Rings** is improved in credibility by the occasional lapsing into genuine examples of Elvish or Orcish. Tolkien, admittedly, was a philologist by profession, and really did invent entire languages on which to draw (I happen to know someone fluent in Tolkien Elvish). I'm not suggesting you should do the same, but you might like to consider constructing a few bits of text in Dwarvish or whatever language is common, so that players may actually be able to recognise the language of an inscription by the script employed. It could add a bit of extra flavour, but is hardly essential.

My last topic for this month is alignment language. I get the impression that these were originally introduced into the game as a "jolly idea" without too much consideration. Then, when it was discovered that they were a useful way of instantly detecting other characters' alignments, there was some hasty backtracking, until you get the emasculated form in the present rulebooks, where speaking your alignment tongue is such terribly bad form that no-one dares to do it. For quite a while, I personally considered alignment languages to be so implausible that I just excised them lock, stock and barrel from my campaign, and never missed them. One or two things are particularly odd — I cannot see, for instance, why a character who reforms from Evil to Good should suddenly forget a language he knew perfectly well. It might become distasteful, but he wouldn't forget the meaning of it in a flash.

The best comparison of alignment languages is with Thieves' Cant — a special subset of English designed to deal with specific ideas. Here is an example: "I saw that hawk in a hazard drum last night, nimming grocery from a nim-gimmer." Genuine Thieves' Cant that, and I bet you can't understand a word of it even if the construction is English. It means: "I saw that card-sharper in a gambling den last night, stealing coppers from a surgeon." Not a very probable communication, I suppose, but....

I reckon alignment language is similar; try this imitation of Neutral: "I hear that the Excelsiors have been doing much threadwork among the nonesuch locally — nothing's an ill wind." This comes out as: "I hear that the Excelsiors (a Neutral sect who believe that Law and Chaos will ultimately pass away) have been doing much conversion among non-Neutrals locally — (proverb meaning all dissension ultimately favours the Neutral cause)". And if that is the case, you can see that alignment language would be fine for discussing philosophical matters, but not much use for asking the way to the nearest dungeon. And I'm sure you would consider it unmannerly if a stranger approached you in the street and asked you what you thought about the divinity of the paracletel

Roger Musson

Previous Stirge Corner themes are detailed below. To obtain back issues see p48.

#1 & 3: Introduction to rpgs; #4-5: Beginner DMs; #6-7: Staying alive; #8: Treasure*; #9: Monsters*; #10: Treasure & monsters*; #11: Time & motion*; #12: Role-playing; #15: Mapping*; #16: Scale; miniature figures; #17: DM-ing equipment*; #18-21: Alignments*

**mainly for DMs.*

Please note that #2, 13 & 14 are out of print.

THE column for the amateur press to tell the professionals where they are going wrong!

SOAPBOX

This month's contributor: Trevor Mendham, editor of the zines **Atu XVIII** *and* **School For Scandal**.

As I write, the run-up to the Christmas period has begun, with lights and decorations appearing in the shops, and advertisements on television. By the time you read this article, a large amount of money will have been spent by people buying presents, and for the readers of this magazine, a lot of it will go towards fantasy gaming products. In this article, I'd just like to urge you to pause a little and think about what you've been buying — and why.

Fantasy gaming is no longer the small, informal hobby it used to be. When the D&D game took off a few years ago, TSR grew almost overnight from a shoe-string operation into Big Business. Sales rocketed, and TSR started making large profits, and other companies were encouraged to join the rapidly growing field. Whereas the original games had been produced out of love and enthusiasm for a new idea, some of the new products of this expanded industry were being designed, marketed and sold with at least half an eye on making money.

There's nothing inherently wrong with profits, of course. TSR, in particular, certainly deserved their initial success, after investing in a new and risky idea. Unfortunately, the industry's trend towards commercialism has accelerated, until nowadays the projected profit is practically the only criterion for deciding on the publication of a game. Quality undoubtedly suffers from the Big Business approach. When the object is to sell as much as possible, then mediocrity and the lowest common denominator become the order of the day. Companies concentrate less on the projects themselves than on ways to sell them.

Thus we have the current predominance of games and role-playing systems based on well-known books, films, characters, etc. In my experience, very few of these products have any inherent quality or innovative ideas, but are merely using a well-known image to sell a second-rate game. Some such games are simply rehashes of another product the company already publishes, placed in a different genre. Thus, consumers may actually be purchasing something which, in effect, they already own. In most cases, a GM with a little imagination could easily produce an equally enjoyable campaign by simply adapting the rules already in use. Yet such use of the imagination — the essential skill of the role-player — is actively discouraged since it detracts from profits. People are persuaded that they should buy commercial modules and rules systems rather than design their own, even to the extent of buying printed character sheets when a scrap of paper would suffice.

The methods used to sell a game regardless of its quality go further than just basing it around a popular image. Recently, there has been a disturbing trend towards excessive packaging. Rule books, which could easily stand by themselves, are placed in a coloured box, possibly with one or two other unnecessary items in order to fill up the space. As a result of this, the price jumps by a large amount, certainly more than could be justified by the cost of the extra packaging.

What is most disturbing about this is not the trend itself, but the fact that we, the consumers, let them get away with it. Are we really willing to spend several pounds more on an item simply because it comes in a pretty coloured box? Depressingly, it seems so. The same also applies in the amateur arena, namely the fanzines. Those with attractive covers and good layout sell much better than the rest. You only have to stand by the fanzine stall at **Games Day** to see this in operation — those zines without an attractive cover are usually unsold at the end of the day. Yet the material they contain is not necessarily inferior to that in another fanzine whose editor simply has no artistic friends. Taking this one step further, a lot of people buy commercial magazines and modules, yet are unwilling even to look at something as 'shoddy' as a fanzine. This despite the fact that the material they contain is often superior to that sold commercially and usually better value for money.

This trend is deliberately reinforced by the terms 'Official' and 'Approved'. Many gamers simply won't buy anything not bearing one of these stamps. This is a ludicrous attitude. 'Official' material isn't inherently superior, it merely means that the companies concerned have come to some licensing agreement. All the term 'Official' guarantees is who will profit from your purchase. It is effectively a con trick used by large suppliers to keep you buying from them and their friends, instead of from independent suppliers.

An extension of this is the implication that we *must* buy the latest products, that we will be somehow less than socially acceptable unless we buy this latest module, that new range of figures, every magazine. How many games or play aids do you have which are no use to you whatsoever? Quite a few, I'd guess. We are the victims of advertising, brainwashed into believing that we must purchase every new product, no matter how useless, no matter how exorbitantly priced, no matter how lousy the quality.

Obviously, I'm not against purchasing *per se*; there are many items on the market which represent good value and are well worth buying. But most of what we see in the shops is overpriced, heavily packaged rubbish we have been taught to believe we should buy.

So long as we continue to accept what we are handed and judge things by their packaging, producers will be able to continue coming out with poor quality, overpriced products. The complaints of a few will barely be heard over the din of rustling five pound notes.

This year, perhaps it's about time we tried to put an end to this commercialism, about time we turned around and said 'No!' When you next decide to buy something, ask yourself whether you really want it, or merely feel you *should* have it. Ask yourself whether you are really willing to pay the extra money for the fancy box. Most important of all, ask yourself whether there might be a cheaper, yet equally good product which is simply in a less attractive cover — possibly even a fanzine.

Trevor Mendham

PRESS CUTTINGS

After the overwhelming piles of fanzines in the previous few months, this month's selection features just 11 of the creatures. The editors have obviously worn themselves out, or are they conserving their efforts for massive Christmas specials?

Whatever the reason, it does give me more space to devote to each of the recent arrivals, and to say a little more about them than the usual one-liner. And some of them are definitely worth a lengthy mention.

DAGON 4 sees this **Call of Cthulhu** fanzine settling down into a fairly regular schedule, now that they have recovered from the initial lack of support. Dagon attempts to offer the CoC player a detailed scenario in every issue, plus material such as new classes, background and fiction. It succeeds admirably in its aim with this issue, the star attraction being the **Brimstone at the Club of the Black Arts** scenario. This is very atmospheric and eerie just to read — it must be terrifying to play! The support material covers a new monster, which looks well designed, and the on-going comic strip. All in all, Dagon is a bargain for any CoC fan, and can only get better.

THE JOURNAL OF THE SENSELESS CARNAGE SOCIETY lacks a Stord cover on #7, but makes up for it with some good articles. The Journal has tended to include useful material in the past, which lead to a very good playing aid, but a rather sterile, characterless 'zine. This is now changing, with the introduction of a letter column (always an easy way to add readability to a magazine), and such things as the **Diary of Bev Plimsoll** — a fiction series. The useful articles are still there, with **Soulquest**, a solo for **Runequest**, which takes up most of the magazine, and two **Traveller** articles, but they form a coherent magazine, rather than a rules supplement. If they can persuade Stord to come back to them, it will be a great 'zine!

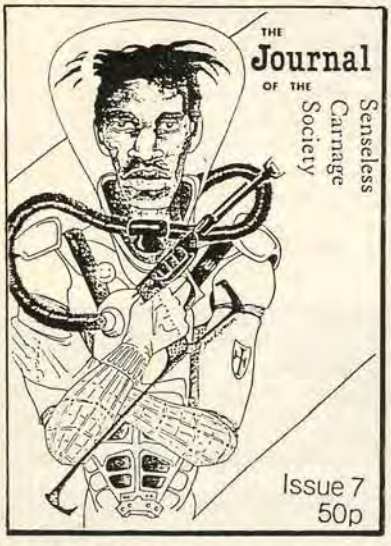
THE BAT 1 is the only new publication this month. It is the product of the Surrey Adventurelords club, and like many club productions, it lacks the polish and slick appearance of the 'independent' fanzine. This is worsened in the Bat's case by not reducing the text on its A5 pages. There is a lot about the Adventurelords club and its organisation, all of which seems a little vague, a short **Traveller** scenario, and other bits and pieces. Possibly interesting if you want to join the club, but I doubt if it has much for outsiders.

REDFOX, the comic 'zine, has reached #2, with the diminutive barbarian heroine learning about magic, and discovering that it is rather more complex than she thought. The comic seems to be developing nicely, with Redfox's character coming through. The dialogue is still a little weak

in places, but the art is good. The humorous approach should appeal to those of you who don't even read comics normally, as much of the action makes gentle digs at rpgs.

TWENTY YEARS ON 11 is the last issue of this information 'zine to be edited and put together by Mark Billenness. He will be handing it over to Ian Shaw from the next issue, but it will continue to offer a full listing of postal gaming 'zines, hobby services and frp 'zines under the new editor.

This piece of news is but one of many in **SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**, Trevor Mendham's gossip and news sheet. It is still the cheapest way of keeping in touch with all the news in the gaming hobby, and often offers interesting insights, which some people would rather keep hidden! Trev has now expanded the coverage of the 'zine to include reviews of new products, making it even more reasonable to rush out there and buy a copy, turning Trev into a filthy capitalist like the rest of the industry.



MAD POLICY 101 is a steady start to the 'zines second century and it continues to feature the news, letter column and games which have made it so popular. Cover featured in this issue is the infamous AK **Diplomacy** game. Well, not so much the game really, as the incredible saga which is included in the game's press section. This features Walkerdine and satirical parodies of all the well-known postal gamers in the **Saga of Akay The Innocent**. To try to describe the plot is almost impossible, and it is the intricacies of detail that the contributors put into their game press that make this amazing story so widely read and appreciated. Many people get a copy of MP just to read the latest on this Saga — there can't be much higher praise than that.

HACKING TIMES, the Greenwich Young Liberals' Diplomacy fanzine was obviously not an elaborate joke, as I suspected, since another issue has now appeared. It offers **Diplomacy** among other games, and a lot of very unfunny political humour (eg, supposed letters from politicians and miners, ho, hol). Again, I doubt if this 'zine would appeal to anyone but a Greenwich Young Liberal.

WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE is far more politically sound, and back to its usual slim size this issue, without a 'borrowed' cartoon in sight. It has the usual efficiently run games of **Diplomacy** and the rules for Postal **Pit**. Oh, and the ubiquitous reprints from computer magazines of course.

LANKHMAR STAR DAILY #11 offers a special **AD&D** issue, with everything for Irvings everywhere. Actually, the AD&D content is minimal — namely, a **Killer Dungeon**. This — now, you wouldn't guess it from the title, would you? — is a four room affair, which looks guaranteed to wipe out even the most over-the-top AD&D characters. Apparently, it was sent in as a serious contribution as well! The rest of the 'zine contains fanzine reviews, letters, film reviews, an excellent introduction to a postal gaming series, and the expected games. And not to be forgotten, there is a **2112** game report which comes free with **LSD**, covering Rob Nott's new frp postal campaign, which looks excellent. It is truly unbelievable how much effort Rob puts into his campaign; it is as detailed as some of the professionally-produced pbm games — and a lot cheaper to play.

Finally, we have **F-PLAN**, Denis Jones' 'zine. This has come a long way since starting life as **THE MALKUTH SCRIPTS**, but this leaves it with a long way to go before it reaches even a reasonable standard. The articles in this 'zine — such as they are — tend to flow rather poorly, containing annoying typing/spelling errors, and they usually end up going nowhere. There are several games on offer, carried over from the previous incarnation, and these are starting to fill up, but overall this is a disappointing read which needs some form of better structuring. Unless you can keep the reader's attention on an article for long enough to actually leave them feeling you have said something, you are wasting your time. F-Plan #3 left me feeling: "So what?"

With all this spare space available for what I suspect will be the only time until Christmas 1985, I would like to make a plea to fanzine editors sending in 'zines. It should be a matter of policy to place their name, address and the price (including postage) on the 'zine, somewhere where it will be found, hopefully. It makes it much easier for potential readers to send off for a copy, or to subscribe once they've received the 'zine.

Lastly, the list of addresses below contains all the 'zines reviewed in this column in the last six months. If the information is out-of-date, please let me know.

'Zines reviewed by Mike Lewis

Contact Addresses

ACOLYTE, Pete Tamlyn, 2 Poplar Road, The Coppice, Aylesbury HP22 5BN (folded); **ANSIBLE**, Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks RG1 5AU (6 for £2); **THE BAT**, John Golden, 56 Brook Road, Thornton Heath, CR4 7RS (?); **BLOOD, GUTS & BEER**, Sue Gardner, 1 Elm Drive, Hove, Sussex BN3 7JS (65p);
CRASIMOFF'S WORLD NEWSLETTER, KJC Games, 5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancs FY5 2BD (50p); **CUT & THRUST**, Derek Wilson, 321 Headley Road East, Woodley, Reading, Berks RG5 4SE (25p); **DAGON**, Carl Ford, 11 Warwick Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 6SW (85p); **DEMON'S DRAWL**, Jeremy Nuttall, 49 Longdown Rd, Congleton, Cheshire; **DRAGONFIRE**, Jez Keen, 1 Glenfield Road, Stockport, SK4 2QP (30p);
FANTASY ADVERTISER, Martin Lock, 3 Marlow Court, Britannia Square, Worcester WR1 3DP (50p); **FIERY CROSS**, Tom Stacey, The Mill House, Rays Hill, Hawridge, Nr Chesham, Bucks HP5 2UJ (55p); **F-PLAN**, Denis Jones, 22 Beechhill Road, Eltham, London SE9 1HH (40p); **GAMERS**, available from Games Workshop, 27-9 Sunbeam Rd, London NW10 6JP (£1.50); **GREATEST HITS**, Pete Birks, 65 Turney Road, London SE21 7JB (50p); **HACKING TIMES**, Dylan Harris, Greenwich Young Liberals, 76 Haddo House, Haddo St, Greenwich SE10; **HOPSCOTCH**, Alan Parr, 6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts (40p);
IMAZINE, Paul Mason, 16 Corncrake Close, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands B72 1HY (50p); **JOURNAL OF THE SENSELESS CARNAGE SOCIETY**, Simon Hartley, 5 Burgh Heath Road, Epsom, Surrey (65p); **LANKMAR STAR DAILY**, Robert Nott, 158 Pendeen Park, Helston, Cornwall (60p);
MAD POLICY, Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PG (45p); **MASTERS OF THE PRIME**, Bryan Betts, 36 Ingestre Road, Hall Green, Birmingham (40p); **MOUSE POLICE**, Rob Wilson, 6 Shorefields, Benfleet, Essex SS7 5BQ (20p); **MYSTIC CRYSTAL**, (?); **NMRI**, Brian Creese, 256 Canbury Park Road, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6LG (45p); **NORST CLAW**, Peter North, 29 Latchford Road, Heswall, Wirral L60 3RN (45p);
OBSCURITY INC, A Keen, Kitchener House, 6 Gordon Terrace, Edinburgh EH16 5QH (55p); **PSYCHOPATH**, Wallace Nicoll, 228 Kinell Ave, Cardonald, Glasgow G52 3RU (60p); **RAPSCALLION**, Steve Norledge, 75 Hawkhurst Way, West Wickham, Kent BR4 9PE (40p); **REDFOX**, Alastair McGilvray, 393 Mansfield Rd, Carrington, Nottingham NG5 2DG (60p); **RUNESTONE**, Bill Lucas, c/o John Astor House, Foley Street, London W1 (50p); **SCAN**, John Freman, 126a Greaves Road, Lancaster LA1 4UW (30p + p&p); **SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**, Trevor Mendham, 53 Towncourt Crescent, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1PH (5 for £1); **SEWARS**, Chris Baylis, 12 The Fryth, Basildon, Essex (60p); **SHADOWFIRE**, Richard Lee, 226 Graham Rd, Sheffield S10 3GS; **SPAWN OF CHAOS**, Mark Pitman, 42 Heath Way, Blofield Corner, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 4RS (50p); **SPECTRAL VISIONS**, Mark McLean, 9 Hill Walk, Nashe Way, Fareham, Hants PO15 6NF (?); **SUPER-HERO UK**, Simon Burley, 20 Honeswode Close, Handsworth, Birmingham 20; **SWANSEA WITH ME**, Matt Williams, 24 Moor St, Coventry CV6 6EQ (40p); **SWANSEA WITH ME**, Alex Zbyslaw, 197 Herbert Ave, Poole, Dorset BH12 4HR;
TAKE THAT YOU FIEND, Kevin Warne, 48 Boscombe Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1JG (35p); **TEMPESTUOUS ORIFICE**, Patrick Fama, 15 York Close, Morden, Surrey SM4 5HW (60p); **20 YEARS ON**, Mark Billenness, 20 Winifred Road, Coulsdon, Surrey CR3 3JA (40p); **TWIQU**, Graham Staplehurst, 62 Church Road, Harlesden, London NW10 (?); **VACUOUS GRIMOIRE**, Richard Roberts, 52 Whalesmead Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hants SO5 6HL (50p); **WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE**, Dave Thorby, Flat 63, Cliffords Inn, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1DX.

TURNBULL TALKING

My thanks, first of all, to those who have added their fuel to the fires of recent debates — on character stables, gp/xp and so forth — and particularly to David Webster, 'Killer Hobbit' Withey and Jeremy Lewis, who have written letters of such recent vintage that they haven't yet been acknowledged.

This time I'd like to air some thoughts on something rather different — game-books. I do this before I've had the chance to read Colin and Graeme's article **Solo Voyages** (see page 34), but that doesn't matter; I suspect my direction of approach will be somewhat different to their's.

I doubt if the subject needs any introduction. The first game-books were the TSR **ENDLESS QUEST™** series, and the Penguin series (starting with **Warlock of Firetop Mountain** by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, two long-standing friends and sparring partners of mine). Others have followed, all on much the same sort of lines, and there are more still to come, both from the original 'lines' and from newer series.

The question I wish to pose is — what, if anything, is their value to the hobby?

I suppose it's no surprise that the two originals — the ENDLESS QUEST and Penguin books — were published at pretty much the same time. They have almost completely different game systems and are aimed at different age ranges of readership, but the idea of solo adventuring has been around for years, and all it needed was someone with bright ideas about the mechanics. Obviously, the ENDLESS QUEST books are 'easier' — in fact it could be said that they make a good introduction to the Penguin series, while the Penguin series makes a good introduction to role-playing games proper.

Let's first of all deal with what they aren't. They aren't role-playing books, any more than computer games can be role-playing. Granted, they put the reader into a role, and ask for decisions to be made, but in general the choice of decision is not the product of the role, it's the product — one hopes! — of common sense. Sometimes, even, it's a matter of random choice, since there's nothing in the role, and nothing in what has gone before, to guide the player towards the 'best choice'.

Secondly, they are not, by definition, open-ended in the same way as a role-playing game should be (and, again, the same comment can be made with reference to computer gaming). There is a very clear limitation on activity and scope.

Thirdly, they are not multi-player (obviously), whereas the role-playing game normally is. Fourthly, they permit no co-operative play, other than that already pre-written into the text, whereas this is a very strong characteristic of the role-playing game.

And, perhaps worst of all, they are fairly trivial — they have to be, given the limitations of the format, the mechanics and the likely age of the reader. Attempts have been made — notably by Steve Jackson in his **Sorcery!** books — to make matters more complex, but although Steve has succeeded in general, the end result is still pretty simple compared to the genuine article.

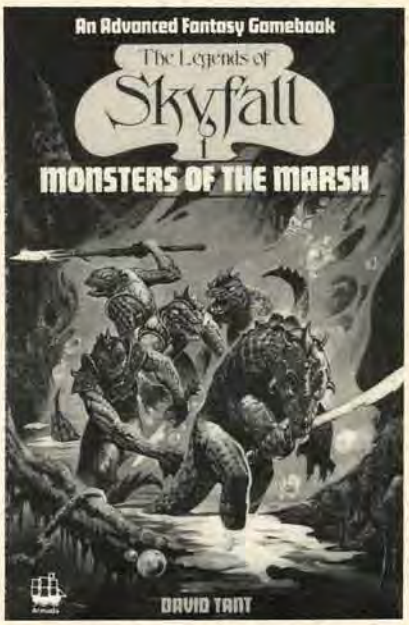
So, on the face of it, they seem to be products of little relevance to the hobby, since they appear to lack some of the most vital ingredients of the games we have come to enjoy. So why is there an article on them in this very magazine; why are the paperback companies falling over themselves to market this kind of book to role-players?

There are common factors. The game-books are firmly based on fantasy, which is not a bad start. They introduce ideas of magic, treasure and monsters to a reader who probably hasn't come across any of these things so explicitly since being told fairy stories years before. They require decision-making, and the capacity to make sound decisions is a key skill in the good role-player. Granted, the scope of that decision-making is limited — that's inevitable — but everyone has to start somewhere.

They also require reading, which may seem an odd thing to say about a book. My point, though, is that an 8-year-old who is not an avid reader in the first place, is much more likely to read a play-it-yourself adventure than pretty well anything else. Thus, an individual is introduced to both reading and fantasy role-playing, whereas otherwise they might not have come within a mile of either.

Adherents to our hobby tend to be, among other things: (a) enthusiastic readers, at least of a certain type of literature, and (b) of above-average intelligence. I think there is a strong connection between the two, so the game-books (in common with role-playing games themselves) seem to have educational merit as well as entertainment value.

So, though the 'cons' seem quite strong, in my view the 'pros' win the day. I have never shared the view that an expansion of the hobby means a dilution of it, and can never understand why those who want the hobby to be élitist — a sort of secret society — think that this would help the hobby at all. Being a big fish (if that's what they want) isn't a lot of use if the small pool you are in is going to dry up or if nobody ever drops by to visit it. And if game-books encourage people to join the hobby and get entertainment from it — as I think they do — I think that's good for them, and good for the hobby (ie, you and me).



The latest in the line of such books will be **The Legends of Skyfall**, written by David Tant and published by Armada. I have just received proofs of the first two covers, and I hope you will all rush out there and buy **Monsters of the Marsh** and **The Black Pyramid**, so that Dave can buy pay his hospital bills after I catch up with him. I read the letters page too, you know!

Don Turnbull

PHALANX

by R. Grenville-Evans

CHUNK the SIXTH: OTHRUNU

WEASEL THE FAIRLY CLEVER AND OGRYN THE BIG FOLLOW MOURLA DEEPER INTO THE BOWELS OF THE CASTLE. BEHIND THEM, MOANING IN HIS WATERY CAVE, AFTER TAKING A MIGHTY BUFFET, LIES THE CRAB-THE TERRIBLE MAN-CRUSTACEAN WHO ALMOST KILLED WEASEL, AND WOULD HAPPILY TRY AGAIN. IN THE VILLAGE, A FEAST IS BUSILY BEING PREPARED.

I GIVE UP-I CAN'T GET A WORD OF SENSE OUT OF MOURLA..
WOMEN ALWAYS MUST BE MYSTERIOUS!
SHH. OTHRUNU IS WITH US.
AAH!
OGRYN! WHAT'S...?
IT'S GOT ME! I CAN'T MOVE! KAAAGHKK
OTHRUNU!
MOURLA! IT IS YOU!
GLUHK! ARE YOU ON FIRST-NAME TERMS WITH ALL THE MURDERERS AROUND HERE, MOURLA?

HAVE TO BE CAREFUL-YOU COULD HAVE BEEN SOME OF BANSHURGA'S HOLY HACKERS. THEY'RE ABOUT HERE!
HOLY HACKERS?
OTHRUNU REFERS TO LORD BANSHURGA DANASKMI'S PRIEST-HOOD - THEY HOLD THEIR 'SACRIFICIAL RITES' HERE.. BUT SURELY, NOT TODAY?
YES. THE CRAB CAPTURED HIS LATEST VICTIM BEFORE THE COMING OF OGRYN AND WEASEL. BANSHURGA HAS BEEN AT THE POOL CAGE, LISTENING, TORMENTING... TO NO AVAIL, OF COURSE.
MOURLA SAID SOMETHING ABOUT MERMAIDS-ARE THEY THE 'VICTIMS'?
YES, OGRYN. NOW LISTEN WELL -I MUST NOT BE DISCOVERED BY THE PRIESTS. GO FROM THE CASTLE... YOU CANNOT, AND MUST NOT PREVENT WHAT IS SOON TO HAPPEN HERE. YOU MUST ATTEND THE FEAST...
THE FEAST! I'D FORGOTTEN!
LISTEN!! ...AND AWAIT MOURLA'S INSTRUCTIONS. GO NOW!! GO!
BUT WHY CAN'T THEY PREVENT THE MURDER OF ANOTHER MERMAID?
PUNCHIN' PRIESTS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
TCHCK!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THEY CALLED YOU 'ONE-PUNCH'-OGRYN!
YOU MUST ALL OBEY ME! MORE THAN ONE MAY BE SAVED IF...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SO? I'VE ONLY MANAGED TO PUNCH HIM ONCE, HAVEN'T I?!

I'VE NEVER KNOWN SUCH A TOUGH PRIEST!
HOLD 'IM! I'LL GET HIS TORCH!
HE'S OUT COLD... NOT SO TOUGH AFTER ALL, THEN?
OGRYN... HE'S DEAD! SOMEONE THREW A DAGGER...
LOOK! THE HILT IS EXACTLY LIKE THAT OF THE SWORD WE WERE GIVEN! OTHRUNU, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
IT IS AN HOUR AFTER MIDDAY WHEN THEY HOBBLE INTO THE VILLAGE
SUCH AN INTRIGUING MIXTURE OF CULTURES AND COLOURS HERE...
OLD HORKIN'S COMING OVER. WHAT SHALL WE SAY? WE GOT LOST?
WELCOME, DEAR FRIENDS! I HAD BEGUN TO THINK YOU HAD LEFT US!
THEY SOON FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE CAVE ENTRANCE..
THE CRAB HAS GONE, I'M GLAD TO SEE.
I'M NOT SO GLAD, IT MEANS HE'S CONSCIOUS AND MOBILE. LET'S HURRY TO THE VILLAGE...
GONE! AND MOURLA, TOO! THEY VANISHED RATHER SWIFTLY!
HMM, WELL, I'M ABOUT TO OFFER SOME COMPETITION! RACE YOU TO DAYLIGHT!
SORRY WE WERE SO LONG, WE...
AH, BUT YOU ARE HERE... AND I WANT YOU TO PROMISE THAT YOU WILL DRINK AND MAKE MERRY NOW!
TODAY, WE HAVE ANOTHER SPECIAL GUEST... HE SAYS HE IS EAGER TO MEET YOU!
I WONDER WHO HE MEANS? MY BET IS, IT'S THIS DANASKMI. WE'D BETTER LAY OFF THE ALE THIS TIME, OGRYN..
AFTER TWO HOURS OF FEIGNED INEBRIETY, HOWEVER, EVEN WEASEL FINDS THE GOING TOUGH.
OH, COME ON, STOATY... HAVE SOME NICE ALE!
ME NAME'S WEASEL... AND I'VE GOT SOME NICE ALE, SO PUSH OFF!
NOW, OGRYN... DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE NOT A MAN!
RAISE YOUR TANKARDS TO LORD BANSHURGA DANASKMI!
YOU WERE RIGHT, WEAS! BIG BEGGAR, ISN'T HE!
BUT OGRYN... LOOK AT THE HILT OF HIS DAGGER... SEEN IT SOMEWHERE BEFORE?
NEXT TIME, COSY CHATS WITH BANSHURGA, AND THE ABDUCTION OF MOURLA.

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